Material Abstract

This thesis examines the role of transformation in medieval English romance. It explores corporeal changes of humans transformed into animals, monstrous men, loathly ladies, as well as the transformative effects of death. However, transformations could also alter one's identity and interior states of being. Transformation in these texts is revealed to affect the body as well as the spirit. This symbiotic relationship between outward body and interior spirit is first demonstrated between two separate persons, and progresses to become localized within the one body and the same soul. Illicit practices of magic as well as the supernatural, powers of the faery otherworld as well as divine might, initiate these transformations. While romance transformations occur through various sources, both licit and illicit, the authors and redactors of these romances consistently employ religious imagery or belief at moments of transformation. This engagement with religious precepts proves to be surprising and unorthodox. As such this thesis explores the relationship between religious belief and the politics of disenchantment.

Transformations in Medieval English Romance

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For Francis

Introduction

Transformations in Medieval Romance

Transformations proliferate in Middle English romance: transformations of the body, such as swans into children, a wolf into a prince, a serpent into a princess, a giant into a knight, a hag into a beautiful lady; and transformations of the spirit, such as the conversion of a heathen sultan, ridding a king of his pride, or the penance of an incubus's son. English romance depicts transformations of both the body and the spirit. Transformation stems from the Latin 'trans' (across, over, beyond) + 'formare' (to form) and denotes metamorphosis, change, even translation or transfiguration, the altering of one form into another. When these words are used, physical alteration perhaps comes to mind, yet the earliest English use of 'transform' according to the OED denotes an interior change: Richard Rolle (d. 1349) writes, 'In transfourmynge of þe saule in þe Godhede'.[1] Transformations in the English language, and in English romance, relate to the body as well as to the spirit. Somatic transformation alters outward appearance; spiritual transformation relates to the interior. Romance often depicts the transformation of the body, affecting or relating to the interior, and vice versa. For the sake of argument, this interiority will be termed 'the spirit', but it encodes a variety of meanings: the spirit, as depicted by Rolle, can refer to the Christian's soul; in a classical sense, it can refer to a person's nature; in a chivalric sense, an individual's 'troth', or composite moral being able to withstand testing; interior identity; and in a broader medieval sense, one's private, interior self and secrets. Medieval English romances depict transformations of both the body and the spirit and display a symbiotic, psychosomatic relation between the two.

[1]Richard Rolle de Hampole, *English Prose Treatise,* ed. by George G. Perry, EETS O.S. 20 (London: Trübner, 1921), p. 15.

Romance develops its name from writings in the vernacular, as opposed to Latin, and descends from the *chanson de geste*—stories of heroics of kings.[2] These heroic deeds of the king and his men drew on older warrior codes of conduct, such as the comitatus code, which emphasised loyalty to the lord, stalwart acts of courage, and honour as the highest reward.[3] Through the *chanson de geste*, courtly values as well as chivalry entered romance. Chivalry embraced the knight's code of conduct based on allegiance to the feudal lord, but also stipulated behaviour toward ladies, familial, courtly, and amorous. This courtly and feminine incorporation into chivalric codes often pitted rivalling virtues against one another: a knight's loyalty to his lady or his reputation of prowess (*Eric et Enide),* his brother or a damsel (Sir Bor's dilemma in *The Vulgate Cycle*), his paramour or the request of his Lord (*Le Bel Inconnu*).[4] These competing virtues allow for narratives of testing to develop. A knight must navigate the complex system of loyalties without violating any of these virtues. Transformed figures often appear in romance to test the knight's adherence to this set of loyalties and to determine the faults, if any, present in the knight's character.[5] While these are commonly feats of prowess, they also test moral precepts, often individual 'troth', and therefore test both the knight's exterior

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[2] For discussions on romance as genre, see John Finlayson, 'Definitions of Middle English Romance', *The Chaucer Review,* 15 (1980-1), 44-62, 168-81; Frederic Jameson, 'Magical Narratives: Romance as Genre', *New Literary History, 7* (1975), 135-63; *The Cambridge Companion to Medieval Romance,* ed. by Roberta Krueger (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); Derek Pearsall, 'The English Romance in the Fifteenth Century', *Essays and Studies,* 29 (1976), 56-83; and Paul Strohm, 'Storie, Spelle, Geste, Romaunce, Tragedie: Generic Distinctions in the Middle English Troy Narratives', *Speculum,* 46 (1971), 348-359. See also Northrop Frye, *The Secular Scriptures: A Study of the Structure of Romance* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976); Kathryn Hume, 'The Formal Nature of Middle English Romance', *Philological Quarterly*, 53 (1974), 158-80; and Yin Liu, 'Middle English Romance as Prototype Genre', *The Chaucer Review,* 40 (2006), 335-53.

[3] Tacitus, *Germaniae*, trans. by M. Hutton, rev. by E. H. Warmington, Loebe Classical Library Series (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1914, repr. 1980), XIII. 13. 3. See also William P. Ker, *Epic and Romance: Essays on Medieval Literature* (London: Macmillan, 1926); *A Companion to Romance: From Classical to Contemporary*, ed. by Corinne Saunders (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004); Rosalind Field, 'Romance in England, 1066-1400', and Helen Cooper, 'Romance after 1400', in *The Cambridge History of Medieval English Literature,* ed. by David Wallace (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 152-76 and pp. 690-719; and *Romance: Generic Transformation from Chrétien de Troyes to Cervantes,* ed. by Kevin Brownlee and Marina Scordilis Brownlee (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England for Dartmouth College, 1985).

[4] J. A. Burrow, *A Reading of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), pp. 160-61.

[5] For an example of this, see Raymond Thompson, '"Muse on þi mirrour...": The Challenge of the Outlandish Stranger in the English Arthurian Verse Romances', *Folklore,* 87 (1976), 201-208.

performance and his interior character. The literary development of chivalry, if it does not speak to transformation itself, certainly speaks to both exterior form and interior character, and therefore informs romantic perception of the body and the spirit.

All manner of transformation occur in all manner of medieval English romances.[6] Transformations appear in shorter Arthurian romances such as *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, The Carle of Carlisle, The Turke and Gawain,* in variations of *The Marriage of Sir Gawain,* as well as in *The Awntyrs of Arthur.* Those transformed appear as ugly women or gigantesque men, who test Arthur's knights. Transformations occur in romances translated from French such as *Melusine, Libeaus Desconus, William of Palerne,* or *Chevalere Assigne.* These French translations all contain animal-to-human metamorphosis. Moreover, they all reveal a knight's identity. Even homiletic or hagiographic romances, such as *Robert of Cisyle, The King of Tars,* and *Sir Gowther* include transformation. While these romances may focus on spiritual transformation, this spiritual change is displayed through the physical body. All of these romances correlate transformation to both the body and spirit. These transformations can be inspired by illicit, learned magic as usurpations of power, or by supernatural forces such as faeries, the demonic, and the divine. These transformations call into question the dichotomy of body and soul, the endurance of identity, and the negotiation of relationships in transformed states.

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[6] This thesis is indebted to many excellent studies on medieval romance. As well as those already mentioned, these particularly include those that address romance beyond Chaucer and Arthurian legend: Helen Cooper, *The English Romance in Time: Transforming Motifs from Geoffrey of Monmouth to the Death of Shakespeare* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Laura Hibbard Loomis, *Mediæval Romance in England* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1969); Dieter Mehl, *The Middle English Romances of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1968); Susan Crane, *Insular Romance: Politics, Faith, and Culture in Anglo-Norman and Middle English Literature* (Berkley: University of California Press, 1986); Rhiannon Purdie, *Anglicising Romance: Tail-Rhyme and Genre in Medieval English Literature* (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 2008); *Pulp Fictions of Medieval England*, ed. by Nicola McDonald (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004); *The Spirit of Medieval English Popular Romance,* ed. by Ad Putter and Jane Gilbert (Harlow: Longman, 2000). Works on medieval romance published by Boydell and Brewer have also been enormously helpful, such as *Readings in Medieval English Romance,* ed. by Carol Meale (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1994); *Tradition and Transformation in Medieval Romance,* ed. by Rosalind Field (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1999); *The Matter of Identity in Medieval Romance,* ed. by Phillipa Hardman (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2002); A *Companion to Popular Romance,* ed. by Raluca Radulescu and Cory Rushton (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009); *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts,* ed. by Rhiannon Purdie and Michael Cichon (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2011); and *Medieval Romance and Material Culture,* ed. by Nicholas Perkins (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2015).

Transformative Agency

One essential component of transformation is agency. Transformation differs from random change, as Gildenhard and Zissos demonstrate, by the presence of an outside agent that is the catalyst of transformation—usually to a definite end: 'Transformation, unlike change, does not simply happen; rather, it requires a code of nature, a supernatural (or human) agent, of another catalyst.'[7] Swan skins transform the wearer only into swans; sorcerers deliberately, not accidentally, enchant the body of their victims: it is not a random process but one formed to a purpose. The notions of agent, or instigator of transformation, and the subject or recipient of transformation, are coupled throughout romances. The agent + recipient appear in romances of somatic change: stepmothers, through acquired powers of 'nigromancy', represent agents, who transform their stepchildren into loathly ladies, werewolves, or swans—the recipients. Similarly, spiritual transformations demonstrate an agent as well as a recipient. For example, an angel from heaven comes to initiate Robert of Cisyle's moral corrective. Guinevere's mother returns from the dead to persuade her daughter against the vice of adultery. The practitioner and the recipient of transformation may be reconciled in the same body—such as the shapeshifting abilities of Merlin, Medea, or Morgan-le-Fay. Both agent + recipient are required for transformations of both the body and the spirit—and it is this presence of agency which marks transformation.

Ideas of transformation—agent and recipient, interior and exterior, body and spirit—are known to have been significant since the high Middle Ages. The work of Caroline Bynum registers the interest of the Middle Ages in metempsychosis and the resurrection of the body, and the various theories of transformation that surrounded

[7] *Transformative Change in Western Thought: a History of Metamorphosis from Homer to Hollywood*, ed. by Ingo Gildenhard and Andrew Zissos (Oxford: Legenda, 2013), p. 15.

notions of the body and soul.[8] She also demonstrates in *Metamorphoses and Identity* that medieval thinkers were concerned with bodily transformation. She delineates two categories: metamorphosis, a complete shift from one form into another, and hybridity, or partial shift, retaining aspects of the old form. Her work supports conclusions similar to mine: that transformation relates to identity, the concept of one's self, and the interior. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen examines hybridity in terms of theory and monstrosity, while Joyce Salisbury explores the hybridization of humans and animals.[9] Corinne Saunders speaks to transformative possibilities in *Magic and the Supernatural*, noting the prominence of shape-shifters in romance, as well as magic's transformative properties.[10] Recently, Miranda Griffin in *Transforming Tales* has demonstrated the prominence of transformation in medieval French literature and uses bodily transformation to discuss *translatio,* or textual transmission and adaptation.[11] These works sufficiently demonstrate that the Middle Ages were concerned with transformation. Earlier scholarship dating to the first half of the twentieth century also considered enchantment and transformation. This body of work focuses on grouping texts into categories and identifying gaps in a story's textual or thematic transmission. When describing disenchantment, writers such as Schofield, Maynadier, and Kittredge approach this topic through folklore and postulate conditions for disenchantment, such as physical contact or obedience to commands.[12] Their

[8] See Caroline Walker Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body in Western Christianity from 200-1336* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), and *Metamorphosis and Identity* (New York: Zone, 2001).
[9] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Hybridity, Identity, and Monstrosity in Medieval Britain: On Difficult Middles* (New York and Basingstoke 2006); and Joyce E. Salisbury, *The Beast Within: Animals in the Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 1994), pp. 137-166.
[10] Corinne Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural in Medieval English Romance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2010).
[11] Miranda Griffin, *Transforming Tales: Rewriting Metamorphosis in Medieval French Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
[12] William Henry Schofield, *Studies on the Libeaus Desconus* (Boston: Published under the direction of the Modern Language Departments of Harvard University by Ginn & Co., 1895); G. H. Maynadier, *The Wife of Bath's Tale: Its Sources and Analogues* (London: David Nutt, 1901; repr. New York: AMS Press, 1972), p. 20; and George L. Kittredge, *A Study of Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (Gloucester, MA: Peter Smith, 1960), pp. 79, 82, 105, 268.

postulations, while perhaps too prescriptive, indicate the interest of medieval writers and critics in the topic of transformation in romance.

However, no work exists that extensively probes transformation in literary medieval English texts. Bynum's study does not continue past 1350, and her definitions of metamorphosis and hybridity do not translate easily into romance: in English romance, according to Bynum's definition, there would be few cases of metamorphosis—nearly all transformations would be hybrids. Instead, I find it more helpful to approach transformation in romance through the body/spirit dichotomy. Miranda Griffin examines popular medieval French texts through transmission. *Transformative Change* surveys metamorphosis from classical philosophers to modern films, yet barely explores ideas of transformation in the Middle Ages. The scholarship on English romance that does address transformation examines magical or supernatural agents. These studies discuss magic, the supernatural, faeries, witches, and sorcerers, and while these agents encode transformative properties, transformation is not the subject of discussion. Corinne Saunders extensively discusses properties of agency, as well as people who transform themselves such as Morgan le Fay, Medea, and Merlin.[13] Michelle Sweeney, in her treatment of magic, focuses broadly on agents of magic in works by authors from Chrétien to Malory.[14] Carolyne Larrington examines female enchantresses, endowed with transformative power, in Arthurian romance.[15] Others discuss fairies and fays.[16] Aisling

[13] 'Erotic Magic: The Enchantress in Middle English Romance', in *The Erotic in the Literature of Medieval Britain*, ed. by Amanda Hopkins and Cory James Rushton (Woodbridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), pp. 38-52; *Magic and the Supernatural,* pp. 117-260; and 'Violent Magic in Middle English Romance', in *Violence in Medieval Courtly Literature: A Casebook* (New York: Routledge, 2004), pp. 225-40.
[14] Michelle Sweeney, *Magic in Medieval Romance from Chrétien de Troyes to Geoffrey Chaucer* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000).
[15] *King Arthur's Enchantresses: Morgan and Her Sisters in Arthurian Tradition* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2006).
[16] See James Wade, *Fairies in Medieval Romance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); and Laurence Harf-Lancner, *Les Fées au Moyen Age: Morgan et Melusine* (Paris: Champion, 1984).

Byrne covers the faery otherworld.[17] Many other critics examine the shapeshifting power of Merlin and the intervention of supernatural powers during the Grail Quest.[18]

Yet little research has been conducted on the recipients of transformation—the person subject to the power of the agent, the tensions this subjection inspires, its purpose within the narrative, its effects on the body and soul of the person transformed and on others surrounding him or her. To complement these studies of agents of transformation, I intend to approach the topic from the subjects of transformation themselves, and the reasons and purposes transformation functions within romance narratives. Scholarship that considers the subjects of transformation tends to focus on stories of werewolves or serpent-women.[19] While these stories do feature in this study, I have taken a broader view, led by the ideas surrounding medieval views of transformation—correlating body to spirit, interior to exterior. This thesis therefore extends beyond animal to human metamorphosis to consider those enchanted by 'nigromancy' or faery, the dead returning as ghosts or revenants, angels assuming human likeness, the healthy becoming sick, the sick becoming well, and the dead returning to life. In light of the popularity and extensive treatment of Arthurian literature, this study will not include practitioners of magic such as Merlin or Morgan-le-Fay. Ideas of transformation enter into romance from a rich background that ranges from classical philosophy to medieval alchemy. The following section will explore the principal aspects of transformation which romance inherits and demonstrate that all of these traditions, despite their diverse origins, relate transformations to both the body and soul.

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[17] Aisling Byrne, *Otherworlds: Fantasy and History in Medieval Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

[18] See Roger Sherman Loomis, *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance* (London: Constable, 1926 repnt. 1993), pp. 124-38; and Richard Barber, 'Chivalry, Cistercianism and the Grail', in *A Companion to the Lancelot Grail-Cycle,* ed. by Carol Dover (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2003), pp. 3-12.

[19] Kate Watkins Tibbals, 'Elements of Magic in the Romance of William of Palerne', *Modern Philology,* 1 (1904), 355-71; and Eve Salisbury, '*Lybeaus Desconus*: Transformation, Adaptation, and the Monstrous-Feminine', *Arthuriana,* 25 (2014), 66-85.

Classical and Biblical Background

Classical ideals of bodily transformation include both gods and men: Athena transforms herself into an owl and Circe transforms men into pigs.[20] Burckhardt relates metamorphoses in early Greek culture to the gods, noting that bodily shapes gods bestowed upon humans often reflected the god's intentions to punish or reward.[21] Transformations in Aesop's Fables (Greek, *ca.* 620-564 BC), the plays of Aristophanes (414 BC), and Apuleius's *The Golden Ass* (*ca.* 157-180 AD) suspend reality and blur the boundary between humans and animals.[22] Chief among classical works is Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* (Latin *ca.* 8 AD), where the flux of form permeates the created universe of both gods and mortals. It demarcates transformation as a supernatural ability of the gods, who transform themselves as well as others. Zeus seduces women in bestial shapes, as a bull with Europa (II. 833-III. 2), as a swan with Leda (VI. 20).[23] The gods transform Lycaon into a wolf (I. 216-239), Io into a cow (I. 601-746), Arachne into a spider (VI.1-145), and Actaeon into a deer (III. 138-252). The story of Actaeon disturbingly explores the retention of human identity whilst transformed: when Diana punishes the hunter Actaeon for glimpsing her naked body by turning him into a stag, the verses convey Actaeon's distress as he attempts to relate his human identity, despite his stag's form, to his ravenous hounds. The gods exploit transformation to suit their whims, and human transformations often occur as collateral. Ovid too links transformations to body and spirit. Gildenhard and Zissos claim that Ovid 'explores our embodiment just as much as the nature and

[20] For a thorough discussion of classical transformation, see *Transformative Change,* ed. by Gildenhard and Zissos, pp. 36-87.
[21] Jacob Burckhardt, *Griechische Kulturgeschichte: Staat und Religion* (Leipzig: Alfred Kröner Verlag, 1929), pp. 305-06.
[22] See Robert H. F. Carver, 'Of Donkeys and D(a)emons: Metamorphosis and the Literary Imagination from Apuleius to Augustine', in *Transformative Change,* ed. by Gildenhard and Zissos, pp. 222-51.
[23] Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, ed. by R. J. Tarrant (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004); ed. and trans. by Frank Justus Miller, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1984), with future references following Tarrant to book and line number.

destiny of our souls within the wider cosmos.'[24] Classical literature proposes a universe of transformative potential, enacted through the power of the gods, thereby drawing into consideration man and his (transformative) relationship of body and spirit to divinity.

Classical philosophers also commented on the transformative properties of the body and spirit. Attributed to the pre-Socratic philosopher Pythagoras is the doctrine of metempsychosis and the transmigration of the soul: the idea that, after death, the soul survives the body and can inhabit a new form.[25] Pythagorean philosophy influenced Plato, Aristotle, and Ovid. Ovid, when describing Pythagorean metempsychosis in Book xv, writes, 'We are not bodies only but also winged souls' (non corpora solum, | verum etiam volucres animae sumus, XV. 456-47). Plato and Aristotle describe the soul's ability to improve (or transform) through the pursuit of virtue, and this virtue expresses itself through rational bodily behaviour. [26] Aristotle's *De Anima* (*On the Soul)* equates the soul of a plant or animal with its form—relating body to soul.[27] Aristotle's ideas found favour with medieval philosophers; they were introduced through Albert the Great and synthesized through his pupil, Thomas Aquinas, who adapted these classical tenets into Christian ones, which influenced medieval perceptions of the soul, its relation to the body, and the transformative potential possible within each.[28]

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[24] *Transformative Change*, p. 72.

[25] See R. M. Hare, *Plato* in *Greek Philosopher: Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle*, by C. C. W. Taylor, R. M. Hare, and Jonathan Barnes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 103-90 (pp. 118-19); Andrew Gregory, *The Presocratics and the Supernatural: Magic, Philosophy and Science in Early Greece* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 127-37; and J. A. Philip, *Pythagoras and Early Pythagoreanism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), pp. 151-62.

[26] Plato's ideas of the progression of the soul are most notably present in the *Symposium*'s 'Ladder of Love' (210a-211b) and *The Republic*'s allegory of the cave (514a–520a). See Michael L. Morgan, 'Plato and Greek Religion', in *The Cambridge Companion to Plato,* ed. by Richard Kraut (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 227-47, (p. 244); Gerald J. Hughes, *Aristotle on Ethics* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 53-81; Susanne Bobzien, 'Choice and Moral Responsibility', in *The Cambridge Companion to Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, ed. by Roland Polansky (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) pp. 81-109 (p. 88-89).

[27] John M. Cooper, 'Aristotle', in *The Cambridge Companion to Greek and Roman Philosophy,* ed. by David Sedley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 125-50 (p. 139-40).

[28] *Medieval Philosophy,* ed. by John Marenbon (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 188-203, 230-236.

Judaism and Christianity too importantly shaped conceptions of bodily and spiritual transformation in Western thought.[29] Ideas of transformation feature in the Old Testament: in Genesis, God created the world *ex nihilo* and gave it form (Gen. 1); Elijah and Enoch do not die, but are taken up, bodily, into heaven (II Kings 2); the witch of Endor raises the dead spirit of the prophet Samuel to converse with King Saul (I Samuel 28); the rod of Moses, as well as those of the Egyptian acolytes, transforms into a serpent (Exodus 7).[30] In the New Testament, concepts of transformation evolve drastically, beginning with Christ himself: God becomes man at the Incarnation, further confirmed in the revelation of his deity, in another transformative moment: the Transfiguration.[31] Miracles of transformation mark Jesus's ministry: water turns to wine, the blind see, the lame walk, the sick become well, the dead return to life. Christ undertakes a series of transformations in his death, resurrection, and ascension. As Christian doctrine evolved through the writings of the apostles, ideas of the transformation of the spirit became a key tenet. Apostolic writings encouraged believers to imitate God. In other words the goal of the post-apostolic Christian was to attain spiritual perfection through a Christ-mediated transformation of the soul (Matt. 5:48). Paul commands the Christian, 'Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind' (Romans 12:2). This spiritual perfection was accomplished through outside agency: the transformative work of the Holy Spirit. For the Christian, even death claimed to be transformative. Paul describes the death of the physical body as a seed sown, raised, and transformed into a new being on Judgement Day (I Cor. 15). This doctrine equates bodily death with spiritual life. This even led martyrs to give up their physical bodies in pursuit of spiritual perfection. Upon Judgement

[29] For some of these ideas see Hans Lietzmann, *A History of the Early Church,* trans. by Bertram Lee Woolf, 4 vols (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1961); W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984); and Herbert Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972).
[30] All further references are to the King James Version of the Bible to book, chapter, and verse. See *The Holy Bible: Authorised (King James) Version: The Authorised Version of the English Bible 1611*, ed. by William Aldis Wright, 5 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); and Beryl Smalley, *The Study of the Bible in the Middle Ages,* 3rd edn (Oxford: Blackwell, repr. 1983).
[31] For further reading, see *Transformative Change*, pp. 187-95.

Day, the Christian will be given a new body with a perfected spirit. Christian philosophy, more than any other ideology, linked bodily and spiritual transformation, and disseminated transformation as reality for every individual.

Medieval Theological Views

Medieval theology developed these tenets of transformation, body and soul, perfection and resurrection, death and life. The early Church interpreted apostolic writings to establish Church doctrine. Ideas of *imitatio dei* continued to resonate. To aid in the process of spiritual transformation, early Christians established the sacraments. In the sacraments, physical acts correlate to the spiritual health of the soul. The bread and wine of the Eucharist, through the doctrine of transubstantiation, become the body and blood of Christ. Baptism of the body marks the moment the soul transfers from spiritual death to spiritual life. Even marriage is described in transformative terms: 'they twain shall be one flesh' (Matt. 10:8). The Church used the body as a conduit to feed the soul. Soul and body transformed and influenced each other. Moreover, the sacraments themselves transformed the individual. Augustine attests to 'the metamorphic effects of Divine Grace' when he hears a divine voice:[32] 'I am the food of the fully grown; grow and you will feed on me. And you will not change me into you like the food your flesh eats, but you will be changed into me' (cibus sum grandium: cresce et manducabis me. nec tu me in te mutabis sicut cibum carnis tuae, sed tu mutaberis in me).[33] The analogy draws on physical consumption of food, imbibed and transformed, within bodies. Feeding on Christ, through the sacraments, transforms the Christian into the likeness of God. Somatic actions influence spiritual transformation. Medieval theology powerfully located transformation as a potential within every body and every soul—one influencing the other.

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[32] Robert Carver, 'Of Donkeys', in *Transformative Change,* ed. by Gildenhard and Zissos, p. 239.
[33] Augustine, *Confessions,* ed. by W. H. D. Rouse, 2 vols (London: Heinemann, 1922-1925), VII. 10. 16. 21-24; trans. by Henry Chadwick (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 124.

Transformation was a spiritual and physical reality that every person must encounter, and nowhere was this more realized than at the moment of death.

Theologians of the Middle Ages hotly debated the resurrection of the body and the placement of the soul in the afterlife. During the Middle Ages, ideas surrounding death and the resurrection of the body powerfully influenced conceptions of bodies and souls and their capacity for transformation. Belief moved from the idea of a total bodily resurrection on Judgement Day to the notion of the soul's departure, at death, to its destination.[34] In the early Middle Ages, writers such as Tertullian argued for the literal resurrection of the body on Judgement Day. However, by the fourteenth century, ideas of resurrection moved to focus on the soul parted from the body at the moment of death. Death initiated judgement for the soul, which determined its location in the afterlife: heaven, hell, or purgatory.

While ideas of heaven and hell as residing places in the afterlife were accepted by early Christians, the doctrine of purgatory developed over the course of the Middle Ages. The doctrine of purgatory developed through the concept that the soul could be transformed and saved through a refining fire: that 'he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire' (I Cor 3:15).[35] Medieval theologians interpreted this fire not metaphorically, but as a spiritual reality that perfected the unclean Christian soul for heaven. This concept of a refining, purging fire of the soul led to the development of the doctrine of purgatory.[36] As ideas of purgatory evolved and widened to encompass the location assigned to most Christian individuals at the time of death, the belief developed that time in purgatory could be lessened through somatic actions, such as The Seven Corporeal Acts of Mercy—which emphasize physical action and include feeding the hungry,

[34] Bynum, *The Resurrection of the Body,* p. 14.
[35] Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory,* trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (London: Scolar Press, 1984), p. 43.
[36] Le Goff, pp. 310-15.

clothing the naked, visiting the sick, and burying the dead.[37] Thus, somatic action during life could influence the soul's status in the afterlife. In addition, the sacrament of penance and absolution often required physical action to atone for sin. These acts undertaken by the body for the health of the soul correlate the physical body to the spiritual soul. Bynum argues that the Middle Ages shifted to emphasize the soul and body as a psychosomatic unit: not a soul trapped in a body, but a person as soul and body: the 'body as the expression of soul, its overflow, the gesture that manifests soul's intention.'[38] Ideas of body and soul, soul surviving body, and body resurrected arrested theologians. Bonaventure describes the soul and body as composite, and Thomas Aquinas in particular followed Aristotelian ideas of the body and soul—namely that the soul is principal to life.[39] The ideas of body and soul transformations depicted in medieval English romance resonate with Bynum's description of the later medieval concept of the somatomorphic soul. This thesis approaches transformation, with its preoccupation with body and soul, and finds that the psychosomatic, body and soul as unit or the body as expression of the soul, offers a lens through which to review romance. Texts such as the Middle English 'The Desputisoun bitwen þe Bodi and þe Soule' describe this psychosomatic relationship. [40] Ideas of the body expressing the soul resonate in episodes of transformation in Middle English romance.

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[37] Christopher Daniel, *Death in Medieval England: 1066-1550* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 20, and S. B. Meech, 'John Drury and his English Writings', *Speculum*, 9 (1934), 76-79.

[38] For this concept, see the following works by Caroline Walker Bynum: 'Faith Imagining the Self: Somatomorphic Soul and Resurrection Body in Dante's *Divine Comedy',* in *Faithful Imagining: Essays in Honor of Richard R. Niebuhr,* ed. by Sang Hyun Lee, Wayne Proudfoot, and Albert Blackwell (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1995), pp. 81-104; *Resurrection of the Body*, p. 319; and *Fragmentation and Redemption: Essays on Gender and the Human Body in Medieval Religion* (New York: Zone, 1991), p. 222-24

[39] Bynum, *Fragmentation,* pp. 227-29; and *Medieval Philosophy*, ed. by Marenbon, pp. 260-61.

[40] For examples, see *Middle English Debate Poetry: A Critical Edition,* ed. by John Conlee (East Lansing: Colleagues, 1991), pp. 7-62; and Elizabeth Robertson, 'Kissing the Worm: Sex and Gender in the Afterlife and the Poetic Posthuman in the Late Middle English "A Disputacioun betwyxt the Body and Wormes"', in *From Beasts to Souls: Gender and Embodiment in Medieval Europe*, ed. by E. Jane Burns and Peggy McCracken (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), pp. 121-56.

Augustine

While spiritual transformations engaged medieval theologians, medieval writings expressed considerable interest and anxiety regarding the possibility of somatic transformation. Could witchcraft transform the body? What were the transformative powers and limitations of sorcerers or demons? Could ghosts be raised? The power wielded by those who employed witchcraft, with its potential to heal as well as harm, caused works such as the Old Testament or Pliny's *De Natura* to condemn the practice of witchcraft as demonic. With the rise of Christianity came a broad condemnation of the power of witchcraft, but this did not put a stop to its practice or belief in its transformative power.

These ideas carried such currency that Augustine found it necessary to address them in *The City of God*. He refers to Circe's powers of metamorphosis, Arcadian werewolf legends, well-attested cases of landladies who slip drugs into their guests' cheese that transforms them into pack-animals, and Apuleius's *Golden Ass*.[41] In these instances, Augustine displays concern with retaining the human mind whilst transformed. As to enacting transformation, Augustine first states that the only way these transformations could be physically possible is if they were enacted by God himself, who may wish to use transformation as a tool to punish or correct the individual in question. Following this, Augustine clearly states that actual human to animal transformation cannot occur through work of demons. Transformative, creative power lies with God alone. He writes: 'I should not believe, on any consideration, that the body—to say nothing of the soul—can be converted into the limbs and features of animals by the craft or power of demons' (Non itaque solum animum, sed ne corpus quidem ulla ratione crediderim daemonum arte vel

[41] Augustine, *The City of God Against the Pagans*, trans. by G. E. McCracken and others, Loeb Classical Library, 7 vols (London: Heinemann, 1957-72), XVIII. 18, with future references to this edition by book, chapter, and line number.

potestate in membra et liniamenta bestialia veraciter posse converti).[42] Augustine's description of transformation indicates aspects of both body and soul—neither of which demons can influence with transformation. He concedes that demons do have the power of apparition: to take on the phantom of a person, to transform that into the likeness of an animal, and to fool both the person and to those the demon may appear into believing this animal is actually the transformed body of a man. Yet Augustine is clear: this is an illusion. Demons do not have transformative powers; those reside within God alone.

Augustine considers the possibility that God himself may initiate physical transformation and, along a similar vein of thought, that God may create races that differ from ordinary human bodies. He describes a variety of monstrous peoples: those with one eye, those without mouths, those only a cubit in height, those with only one leg instead of two, those without necks and with eyes in their shoulders, and even hybrid races—mixtures of dogs and men.[43] Could these people possess salvation? Further to this, what were the qualifiers of humanity that thereby allowed them to receive salvation? He calls into question the demarcation between monstrosity and humanity. Augustine does not contradict their existence, but carefully defines the qualifiers of humanity—and therefore of those who may possess salvation. He writes:

> What am I say to say of the Cynocephali, whose dog's heads and actual barking are evidence that they are rather beasts than men? To be sure, we do not have to believe in all the types of men that are reported to exist. Yet whoever is born anywhere as a human being, that is, as a rational [and] mortal creature, however strange he may appear to our senses in bodily form or colour or motion or utterance, or in any faculty, part or quality of his nature whatsoever, let no true believer have any doubt that such an individual is descended from the one man who was first created.
>
> Quid dicam de Cynocephalis, quorum canina capita atque ipse latratus magis bestias quam homines confitetur? Sed omnia genera hominum, quae dicuntur esse, credere non est necesse. Verum quisquis uspiam nascitur homo, id est animal rationale mortale, quamlibet nostris inusitatam

[42] *City of God,* XVIII. 18. 37-40.
[43] *City of God*, XVI.

> sensibus gerat corporis formam seu colorem sive motum sive sonum sive qualibet vi, qualibet parte, qualibet qualitate naturam, ex illo uno protoplasto originem ducere nullus fidelium dubitaverit. [44]

He identifies two markers of salvation: a being must be both rational and mortal. 'Rational' he defines as possessing the faculty of speech. The Cynocephali prove they are not human because they bark as dogs instead of using human language. He defines mortal as descending from Adam's lineage. Having delineated the markers of salvation to distinguish between human and non-human, those beings who may receive the gift of salvation and those who may not, Augustine leaves all other distinctions to God's own judgement. Augustine opens himself up to the possibility of God's salvation extending to the extraordinary. Augustine's views on hybrids and monstrous races touch on creative possibilities, and his qualifiers of humanity proved influential in later medieval discourse on the subject. Many later medieval fictional writings on transformation engage with Augustine's qualifiers of salvation and question the effect of a transformed physical body to the soul.

Those who followed in Augustine's wake rehearsed and expanded his ideas of transformation. The Canon Episcopi (*ca.* 900) upheld Augustine's principles and condemned the belief 'that any creature can be made, or transmuted for better or worse, or transformed into some other species or into any other likeness, except by the Creator Himself'. [45] Transformative possibilities interested theologians, particularly transformations attributed to demons or magic. Theologians such as Peter Lombard, Albert the Great, Thomas Aquinas, and John of Salisbury considered transformations—from demons' capacity to procreate to the transformations of the staff of Moses.[46] They puzzled over the transformation of Moses's staff into a serpent and the power of the

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[44] *City of God*, XVI. 8. 22-23.
[45] *Decretorum Canonicorum collectanae, Decreti secunda pars causa* XXVI. Quest. 5. 50. 12, cols. 1030-31, as quoted by Carver, 'Of Donkeys', in *Transformative Change,* ed. by Gildenhard and Zissos, p. 246, and 303 n. 52.
[46] Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity,* pp. 84-86; 90-92.

Egyptian acolytes to achieve the same. Bynum describes the theories they posited as ranging from natural causes to an acceleration of the serpent's inchoate seed to deprivation of species.[47] The theologians expressed concern over the transformative power of magic attributed to the Egyptian acolytes and sought to explain the transformation through means of nature or science, rather than through witchcraft or sorcery.

Four Distinct Transformative Agents

The discourse on the rod of Moses touches upon possibilities and fears surrounding magic, science, religion, ritual and agency—and their transformative possibilities. Magic realises the possibilities of somatic transformation. Transformation links to magic and the supernatural, science and medicine, the licit and the illicit.[48] To some extent, the application of magic and the supernatural is transformative: the change from sickness to health, from sanity to madness, from visibility to invisibility. These transformations, especially as they appear in romance, may be enabled by four distinct agencies: natural magic; black magic; divine and demonic power; and the power of faery and the otherworld.[49]

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[47] Ibid., pp. 90-92.

[48] For historical approaches to magic in medieval England, see C. S. Watkins, *History and the Supernatural in Medieval England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Catherine Rider, *Magic and Religion in Medieval England* (London: Reaktion, 2012); Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972); Edward Peters, *The Magician, the Witch, and the Law* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1978); George Lyman Kittredge, *Witchcraft in Old and New England* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1956); Valerie Flint, *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991); Karen Jolly, Catharina Raudvere, and Edward Peters, *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe: The Middle Ages,* The Athlone History of Witchcraft and Magic in Europe, III (London: Athlone, 2002).

[49] See Corinne Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, pp. 117-233, and 'Religion and Magic' in *The Cambridge Companion to Arthurian Legend*, ed. by Elizabeth Archibald and Ad Putter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), pp. 201-217. See also Helen Cooper, 'The Supernatural', in *A Companion to the* Gawain-*Poet*, ed. by Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1997), pp. 277-91, and 'Magic that Does Not Work', *Medievalia et Humanistica,* 7 (1976), pp. 131-46.

Natural Magic

Natural magic revolved around the belief that the universe was an organism of complex, interrelated networks and that the natural powers that governed the universe, which emanated from stars and planets, could be harnessed in plants or stones.[50] The natural magic within stars and plants, planets and stones, elements and metals could influence a person's body and spirit: appetite, appearance, desires, fears, and health. Stephen Wilson writes on the historical practices surrounding ritual and belief in human attempts to harness natural magic. He describes how the uses of natural magic varied but might include attempts to influence a good harvest, foster love and fertility, prevent and cure disease, locate lost objects or missing persons, or divine and prophesy.[51] Texts such as Hildegard von Bingen's *De Physica* or *De Viribus Herbarum* demonstrate that the powers resident within plants and animals could be harnessed to cure illness or prevent disease. Moreover, these physical illnesses were thought to have spiritual causes such as sin, demons, or spells of witchcraft.[52] For example, betony protects the body and the soul by warding off nightmares and nocturnal visitors as well as curing physical ailments such as nosebleeds, fatigue, gout, fever, and toothache.[53] Thus, many remedies influence the body as well as the spirit.[54] The power of a plant or stone may be combined with supernatural power in order to increase its potency through reciting spells or words of liturgy. Natural properties within plants concocted into poultices, infusions, and ointments conjoined

[50] Many of the following ideas can be found in the work of Corinne Saunders, such *Magic and the Supernatural,* pp. 87-99, 117-124; 'Magic and Christianity', in *Christianity and Romance in Medieval England,* ed. by Rosalind Field, Phillipa Hardman, and Michelle Sweeney (Cambridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2010), pp. 84-101; and 'Religion and Magic' in *The Cambridge Companion to Arthurian Legend*, ed. by Archibald and Putter, pp. 201-17. See also *Witchcraft in the Middle Ages*, p. 5.

[51] Stephen Wilson, *The Magical Universe: Everyday Ritual and Magic in Pre-Modern Europe* (London: Hambledon and London, 2000), pp. xvii-xxx.

[52] Sulpicius Severus and Gregory of Tours name sin as the cause of disease. See Wilson, *Magical Universe,* pp. 313-14.

[53] *The Old English Herbarium and Medicina de Quadrupedibus,* ed. by Hubert Jan de Vried, EETS O.S. 286 (London: Oxford University Press, 1984), p. 1.

[54] For a discourse on natural magic and the relation of the soul to the body, see Karen Jolly, *Witchcraft and Magic,* pp. 30-42.

magic with the empirical.[55] Moreover, the protective powers of amulets (composed of herbs or animal parts) or talismans (composed of written words) were thought to offer spiritual powers of protection to the wearer. The body parts of a vulture, when used as amulets, were said to ward off physical assailants (thieves) as well as spiritual ones (demons, sorcerers).[56] While the practice of natural magic blended science and medicine with religion and superstition, its ability to heal caused concern in the Church with regard to the legitimacy of magical arts to influence health.[57] Isidore of Seville differentiates medical practitioners from magical quacks. While romance writings that feature natural magic are perhaps not quite as proscriptive as these medical treatises, they too feature the hopes and fears surrounding objects which held latent forces of the universe. Corinne Saunders deftly explores how objects of natural magic appear in romance to protect and heal, and while their power may be misused or even extended to influence love, desire, and visibility, they are ultimately of the created, natural world.[58] Natural magic holds promise, but it also encodes fear for the use of good or evil, as well as the possibility of demonic machinations, and certainly encodes possibilities of influencing the body as well as the soul.

Black Magic

While natural magic worked with the latent powers manifest within the universe, necromancy—or black magic—specifically sought to harness demonic power. The term necromancy stems from the Greek *mantia*, 'divination', and *necroi*, 'the dead', and originally meant divination by conjuring the spirits of the dead.[59] In the seventh century, Isidore of

[55]Wilson, *Magical Universe,* p. 336
[56]As delineated at the end of Book I in Dioscorides' *Materia Medica;* see Loren C. Mackinney, 'Unpublished Treatise on Medicine and Magic from the Age of Charlemagne', *Speculum* 18 (1943), 494-96.
[57] See Corinne Saunders, 'Magic, Science and Romance: Chaucer and the Supernatural', in *Medieval English Literary and Cultural Studies*, ed. by Juan Camilo Conde Silvestre and Mª Nila Vásequez González, SELIM XV (Murcia: University of Murcia Press, 2004), pp. 121-43.
[58] Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural,* pp. 117-151.
[59] Richard Kieckhefer, *Magic in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 152-53.

Seville, in *Etymologies,* describes *necromantia* in both terms—raising spirits of the dead and demonic power—conjured through incantations and the blood of corpses.[60] However, later medieval writers, following Augustine's prescriptions, concluded the dead could not be raised, but demons could take on the likeness of the dead. Therefore, the medieval writers considered necromancy explicitly demonic. Richard Kieckhefer documents the history of necromancy, and demonstrates how, through the rise of universities and influence of Arabic learning, perceptions of the practitioner of magic shifted from the local diviner who assisted customers in locating lost or stolen goods to the necromancer or learned 'clerk'.[61] In order to conjure demons, the necromancer used incantations, bodies of animals (particularly the blood and skin), detailed diagrams, fumigations from the smoke of spices, and magic circles with complex ligatures. He may have invoked demons by name, thrown salt into fire, baptised images, sung chants, offered sacrifices of his own blood, and promised devotion to the demons. Ideas of sympathy, like influencing like, physical contact, binding, repetition, or opposition were key to enacting these magical powers.[62] Furthermore, the employment of such activities conjured demons to affect both the minds and bodies of others—from inspiring madness to inflaming genitals with sexual desire. Kieckhefer divides the use of necromancy into three areas: to affect the minds and wills of others (i.e. influencing love, favour, enmity, etc.), to create illusions, and to discern secret knowledge. The demonic power of illusion ranged from the appearance of a banquet to making the dead appear alive. A consecrated ring could summon demons to animate a corpse; conversely, the same ring, when worn by the living, makes them appear dead. *The Book of Munich* attests to this transformative power: when the necromancer successfully employs demons to bring him his desired lady, one demon

[60] *The Etymologies of Isidore of Seville,* ed. by Stephen A. Barney and others (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2006, 2006), VIII. 9. 11.
[61] Many of the following examples can be found in Kieckhefer, pp. 7, 151-75
[62] Wilson, *Magical Universe,* p. xxiv.

remains behind in her likeness so her presence at home will not be missed. The necromancer, while he himself may not transform, influenced power over demons that did have powers that appeared to be transformative. Nevertheless, the necromancer's ability to harness occult powers affected his spirit. John Lydgate (*ca.* 1370- *ca.* 1451) in *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man* describes an allegorical encounter with Necromancy, who carries a book entitled *The Death of the Soul.*[63] Physical rituals the necromancer uses to harness this demonic power influence his salvation. Moreover, occult powers effect change in both interior and exterior aspects of the necromancer's victims. The magic of necromancy, with its complex relationship with science and religion, medicine and miracle, enacts illicit somatic and spiritual transformative possibilities.

However, the medieval cultural practice of necromancy differs somewhat from its appearance in medieval romance. Middle English romance tends to use the term 'nigromancy' which as Helen Cooper observes, refers not to occult magic, but to magic on the border of acceptability.[64] Its etymology in Middle English derives, not from 'necroi' (dead), but from 'niger' (black).[65] Corinne Saunders traces the use of 'nigromancy' in medieval romance and demonstrates that even though it is not necessarily demonic, the term usually indicates malevolent or harmful uses of witchcraft. 'Nigromancy' and its synonyms of sorcery and witchcraft include the power of illusions, manipulation, and shapeshifting and metamorphoses. In the romances this study examines, 'nigromancy' pervasively effects somatic transformations, particularly as a usurpation of power, yet rarely are the mechanics of 'how' this illicit magic functions described. Following on from Corinne Saunders's use of the word, this study will use the term 'nigromancy' when discussing this illicit magic featured in romance.

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[63] John Lydgate, *The Pilgrimage of the Life of Man*, EETS, E.S. 77, 2 vols (London: Paul, Trench, and Trübner, 1899-1904), Vol. II, ll.18,471-924, (ll. 18,908-10).
[64] See Helen Cooper, *English Romance*, p. 161; and Corinne Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural,* pp. 65-66, 154-78.
[65] Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural,* p. 154.

Demonic Agency

While romance may not normally feature demonic means empowering 'nigromancy', it does feature demons who have the ability to transform. A demon, transformed into the likeness of her husband, rapes and impregnates Sir Gowther's mother.[66] This frightening demonic transformation however appears to occur because of a spiritual slip on behalf of Gowther's mother. She verbalises a wish to become pregnant by whatever means, holy or unholy, and the demon appears to fulfil this desire. This instance appears to relate spiritual holiness to somatic transformation.

The transformative powers of demons greatly interested medieval theologians. Demons interact with humans to mislead, tempt, and corrupt them away from Christian salvation: their chief purpose is spiritual. However, to achieve these ends, demons tempt through the senses and affect thoughts; they may even transform into human bodies in order to seduce and corrupt.[67] The transformative powers attributed to demons, delineated by Augustine and practised by the necromancer, stirred theologians to demarcate the extent of demons' power of transformation—especially their potential to engage in acts of sex with humans. Thomas Aquinas describes at length how demons may procreate with mortals. A succubus (a demon in female form) could procreate with a man, retain his seed, shift into male form (an incubus), fornicate with a woman, and thereby impregnate her.[68] Transformative effects of this demonic union may even appear on the children: in *De Origine Gigantum* (*ca.* 1330), a band of women who sleep with incubi give birth to giants, and these giants constitute the original inhabitants of Britain.[69] Writers

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[66] *Sir Gowther*, in *Six Middle English Romances*, ed. by Maldwyn Mills (London: Dent, 1973), pp. 148-68.
[67] See Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica,* ed. by Thomas Gilby and others, 51 vols (London: Blackfriars, 1964), Ia. 57. 4, with further references to the volume, question, and article of this edition.
[68] For a discussion of this, see Dyan Elliott, *Fallen Bodies: Pollution, Sexuality, and Demonology in the Middle Ages* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), pp. 52-60. Elliott argues that as conceptions of demonic bodies developed over the Middle Ages, demons slowly lost their physical body (which was seen as the means of redemption) and was replaced with a purely spiritual one (pp. 127-56).
[69]See James P. Carley and Julia Crick, 'Constructing Albion's Past: An Annotated Edition of *De Origine Gigantum*', *Arthurian Literature,* 13 (1995), 41-144. For an English translation, see Ruth Evans, 'Gigantic Origins: An Annotated Translation of *De Origine Gigantum', Arthurian Literature,* 16 (1998), 197-211.

such as Gervase of Tilbury (1210-1214) and Walter Map (d. 1210) also visualise such possibilities.[70] The *Malleus Maleficarum* even proposes an antidote for intercourse with demons.[71] While debates on the bodies of demons shifted over the Middle Ages, scholars maintained that demons could influence the mind and bodies of humans through incredible acts of transformation and procreation that ultimately imperilled the mortal soul. In light of this, demonic transformation also links body and spirit.

Divine Agency

On the converse side of demonic transformative power stands divine power. Divine power may manifest itself in a variety of ways—from miracles of healing or happenings that seem extraordinary to transformations of the dead raised to life. Historically, a medieval audience would not find divine miracles or transformations out of place. The rise of the cult of saints, and the miracles (often transformative) that surrounded the saint's body created an atmosphere within the populace that anticipated divine miraculous intervention.[72] The bodies of saints themselves were thought to be endowed with transformative potential. Miracles occurred around the saint's body, both in life and in death, and different saints were invoked for different physical cures. St Sebastian protected against the plague. St Apollonia cured toothache. St Lucy became associated with cures to eyes. All over Europe, people testified to miracles at the shrine of saints; moreover, miracles at shrines became a prerequisite for becoming a saint. Many of these miracles healed infirmities. Albert the Great defines miracles as transformation: 'the method of miracles is this: the transformation of matter'.[73] Miracles indeed were

[70] Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia*, ed. and trans. by S. E. Banks and J. W. Binns, 2 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002) I. 17, with future references to book, chapter, and line; and Walter Map, *De Nugis Curialium: Courtiers' Trifles,* ed. and trans. by M. R. James, rev. by C. N. L. Brooke and R. A. B Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), II. 11-13.
[71] Heinrich Kramer and James Sprenger, *Malleus Maleficarum,* ed. and trans. by Christopher S. Mackay, 2 vols (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), Vol. II, 160A-160C.
[72] *Saints and their Cults: Studies in Religious Sociology, Folklore and History*, ed. by Stephen Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).
[73] Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity,* p. 92

transformative in nature. Benedicta Ward describes how miracles recall the first miracle of creation—all miracles echo this in re-creation, renewal, and re-birth.[74] While miracles take many forms, they demonstrate that the body of the spiritually perfect saint is endowed with physical, transformative abilities. Here spiritual perfection in one person relates to somatic change in another. Transformation through miracle occurs over two bodies and links somatic to spirit.

Divine power also appears as a transformative agent in romance in the form of miracle or marvel, angel or revenant. An angel appears in the romance *Robert of Cisyle* transformed as the king's double, and uses this act of transformation to teach the king a lesson in humility. In *Amis and Amiloun,* the divine inflicts the protagonist with leprosy as a consequence of sin. The portrayal of divine transformation in romance links body to spirit. Yet the presence of divine supernatural in romance does not preclude the presence of 'nigromancy' or even of faery. While theologians could easily rewrite pagan ideas of faery as demonic, romance presents the otherworld and its powers neither as benign nor as malevolent, but as a nearby force one may encounter unexpectedly.

The Otherworld

The fourth transformative agent the Corinne Saunders delineates is the power of faery and the otherworld. Historic evidence details Germanic and Celtic beliefs in faeries, elves, or little people that they may interfere, for good or evil, to influence one's fortune and may be consoled or bribed through gifts.[75] In Britain, texts such as *Beowulf* testify to how literature prior to the conquest incorporated both pagan and Christian elements. Romance absorbed faeries and otherworlds from folklore or Celtic and Scandinavian

[74] See Benedicta Ward, 'Miracles in the Middle Ages', in *The Cambridge Companion to Miracles,* ed. by Graham H. Twelftree (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), pp. 149-64.
[75] See *Magic and the Supernatural*, pp. 93-95, 179-80.

sources that often exhibit transformative power.[76] Stories of women, children, and faeries who transform, often into birds, appear in Celtic legends and are thought to be sources for legends such as *The Lay of Graelent* and *The Story of Wayland.* Romance presents this otherworld through potential paramours (*Yonec, Sir Launfal*) or those who upset temporal power (*Sir Launfal, Sir Orfeo*). The figure of the loathly lady in Irish stories of sovereignty relates testing to transformation, and provides the source for analogues such as *The Wife of Bath's Tale*. Celtic legends of the opponent who survives beheading stand as the source for *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.* These Celtic legends relate the supernatural transformed body of the otherworldly figure to the protagonist's integrity and identity. Once again somatic transformation relates to interiority. Faeries, as well as demonic and divine agents, inherently possess powers of transformation. Magic, then, limits itself to that which is wrought by human practitioners, while the supernatural exceeds temporal machinations and points to an outside force, be that demonic, divine, or faery.[77]

These four transformative agents permeate romance. Magical and supernatural agents appear in romance in positions of power that supersede courtly society. This ulterior, supernatural power positions itself to weigh and assess courtly society in romance; if the rulers of courtly society proves wanting, the wielder of supernatural power can move to impose justice, or a higher strain of morality, on courtly society in romance, which its rulers can neither achieve nor aspire to. Magical and supernatural agents often assess and correct courtly society through a transformed appearance that differs from their true nature. This transformed, supernatural testing exposes flaws in courtly society

[76] See Stephen Knight, 'Celticity and Christianity in Medieval Romance', in *Christianity and Romance in Medieval England,* ed. by Field, Hardman, and Sweeney, pp. 26-44; Loomis, *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance*; and Rachel Bromwich, 'Celtic Elements in Arthurian Romance: A General Survery', in *The Legend of Arthur in the Middle Ages: Studies Presented to A. H. Diverres,* ed. P. B. Grout, *et al* (Cambridge: D S Brewer, 1983), pp. 41-55.
[77] Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural,* p. 7.

and therefore relates to interiority. In romance, a physical transformation corresponds to interiority. Transformation once again links the body with the spirit.

The Twelfth Century and Beyond

Several key social changes took place around the twelfth century that influenced medieval concepts of transformation. The first was the establishment and rise of universities. Second, dissemination of Arabic learning influenced medieval perceptions of magic and transformation. Arabic teachings influenced both white and black magic through astrology, horoscopes, astral magic, alchemy, science, and medicine.[78] The Arabic book *Picatrix* recorded astral magic, wondrous properties of herbs, and even methods for constraining demons. These ideas influenced European conceptions of magic, as well as science and medicine. The Arabic science of alchemy, widely disseminated throughout Europe, importantly informed concepts of transformation. Alchemists turned base metals into the philosopher's stone through a series of three key transformations: the nigredo, the albedo, and the rubedo phases.[79] As this transformative science developed, alchemy adopted spiritual terms as the change of metal into a precious stone yielded perfect analogies of the perfection of the soul to be undertaken by Christians. The Arabic influence on medieval Europe, particularly the science of alchemy, became a tool to describe transformations of the body and the spirit. Ideas of medieval alchemy trickle into romance to describe bodily transformation, as in *The Turke and Gawain*, or spiritual transformation, as in *Sir Gowther*.

In the thirteenth century copies of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* were discovered, translated, and widely disseminated. Ovid became a classroom favourite, and nearly every

[78] Kieckhefer, pp. 116-44.
[79] See E. J. Holmyard, *Alchemy* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1957); and Lyndy Abraham, *Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

educated schoolboy encountered him.[80] Medieval writers, such as the fourteenth-century French compiler of the *Ovide Moralisé* or Pierre Bersuire (*ca.* 1290-d. 1362) in his *Ovidius Moralizatus,* took Ovid's tales of metamorphosis and translated these into spiritual allegories. These allegories took stories of bodily transformation and spiritually conceived them—connecting the body and the spirit, the sacred to the secular. Miranda Griffin writes that the mutating bodies within the *Metamorphoses* facilitated contemplation of 'the mysteries of divine embodiment'.[81] This interpretation of Ovid connects physical transformations to spiritual states. Transformation speaks to both the body and the soul. That these allegories contradicted themselves, as well as the stories' original meanings, did not bother these compilers; what was important was that these writings were sanctioned by the Church and offered a vantage point for discussing an intersection between the sacred and secular and the fascinating translation of physical transformation to spiritual allegory.

Moreover, the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, in addition to seeing the rise of Ovid's stories of metamorphosis, also witnessed the rise of other stories of transformation. Scholars have noted that prior to the twelfth century, the Middle Ages seem uninterested in human to animal metamorphosis, perhaps due to the sanctity of humans in the divine cosmos, fears of pollution and the female body, or shifts in conceptions of death and resurrection.[82] Yet around 1200 stories of metamorphosis began to appear. Gerald of Wales records an encounter with the Werewolves of Ossory. Other stories of werewolves, such as *Arthur and Gorlagon* and *Melion* appear. Marie de

[80] E. H. Alton and D. E. W. Wormell, 'Ovid in the Mediaeval Schoolroom', *Hermathena*, 94 and 95 (1960 and 1961), 21-38 and 67-82.
[81] Miranda Griffin, *Transforming Tales,* pp. 31-67 (p. 66).
[82] Scholars have postulated medieval resistance to ideas of metamorphosis might be due to several reasons, such as the privileged position of man as rational being, anxieties regarding death and decay, or fear of pollution through women. See Bynum, *Resurrection of the Body*, pp. 32-33, 112-114, and *Metamorphoses and Identity*, p. 83. See also Salisbury, *The Beast Within,* pp. 137-66; Dennis M. Kratz, 'Fictus Lupus: The Werewolf in Christian Thought', *Classical Folia,* 30 (1976), 47-79; and Robert H. F. Carver, 'Defacing God's Work: Metamorphosis and the 'Mimicall Asse' in the Age of Shakespeare', in *Transformative Change,* ed. by Gildenhard and Zissos, pp. 273-306 (p. 273).

France's tales of transformation range from werewolves-as-knights in *Bisclavret* to faeries-into-hawks in *Yonec*. Gervase of Tilbury collected stories of transformation ranging from hybrids in hagiography to ladies who transform into serpents. Moreover, continental romances began featuring stories of women transformed into serpents as found in *Lanzelet*. While theologians continued to toe the party line that transformation by demons or witchcraft was only illusory, the interest these stories gathered suggests popular thought considered otherwise. However, these stories continue to probe relations of body to soul. Could werewolves, hybrids, and serpent-women be saved? To what degree did one retain or lose the markers of humanity through transformation? And what effect did intercourse with faeries or demons have on the mortal human? These stories probe depths of theology that could not be sounded in religious discourse, as the questions themselves were not strictly orthodox. The Church maintained that witchcraft could not transform substance, but it may influence demons to appear in human likeness.

Concurrent with medieval romance were two other bodies of literature which importantly feature transformative agency in similar ways to romance—through natural magic, black magic, demonic or divine power, and the faery otherworld—and may have influenced the portrayal of transformation in medieval English romance. The first body of literature to engage and develop concepts of transformation was hagiography. Hagiography details fantastic transformations of demons, angels, and even magicians. Hagiography renders visible biblical tenets such as 'Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light' (II Cor. 11:14), or that as an individual does 'unto one of the least of these', he or she does unto Christ himself (Matt. 25:40), or that the believer may have 'entertained angels unawares' (Hebrews 13:2). Demons transform into an array of disguises in order to lure the saint to sin. In Athanasius's account of the life of St Antony, the devil fashions himself as a lascivious woman, a troop of soldiers, and an array of wild beasts—that

include snakes, lions, bulls, wolves, vipers, serpents, scorpions, leopards, and bears.[83] In the life of St Margaret, a demon appears as a dragon and even devours Margaret. Moreover, demons can also facilitate human transformations. Through magical demonic power, Simon Magus, the magician who opposed Peter and Paul, causes a ram to take his appearance.[84] To persuade St Justina to sleep with him, the magician Cyprian transforms himself into a bird and into a woman.[85] The devil employs these disguises in order to harm the saint's spiritual progress. However, divine agents also employ physically transformed bodies to test the saint's holiness.[86] St Gregory testifies that divine agents transform from angels into sea merchants or small boys.[87] Moreover, an angel assumes Katherine's likeness to rule her kingdom while she is transported to heaven for her heavenly marriage.[88] Even here physical transformation relates to the soul: her angelic double allows her to experience transcendent joy. Bodily transformation stands as a means of testing the interior state of the saint. These agents, demonic and divine, somatically transform in order to test the saint's holiness, and transformation may, as in Capgrave's account, be used as a reward. Somatic transformation in one figure relates to spiritual interiority in another.

The second body of literature that pervasively engages physical and spiritual transformation is Norse legends. The *Prose Edda* describes swan mantles and wolf skins that transform the person who wears them into that animal's form.[89] The most well-known shapeshifter of Norse legend is Odin, who transforms himself into birds, fish,

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[83] Carolinne White, *Early Christian Lives* (Penguin: London, 1998), p. 15.
[84] Jacobus de Voragine, 'Saint Peter, Apostle', in *The Golden Legend: Readings on the Saints,* trans. by William Granger Ryan, 2 vols (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), Vol. I, pp. 340-50 (pp. 342-43).
[85] 'Saint Justinia, Virgin', in *Golden Legend,* Vol. II, pp. 192-195.
[86] For a further discussion on strange miracles, see C. S. Loomis, *White Magic: The Folklore of Christian Legend* (Cambridge, MA: Mediæval Academy of America, 1948).
[87] 'Saint Gregory', in *Golden Legend,* Vol. I, pp. 171-84 (p. 172).
[88] John Capgrave, *Life of Saint Katherine*, ed. by Karen Winstead, TEAMS (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1999), III. 1,460-74. All further references are to this edition by line number.
[89] The following notion of Norse transformation follows Catharina Raudvere, *Witchcraft and Magic in Europe,* pp. 75-171 (pp. 101-07).

serpent, and beast. Indeed, the phenomenon of shapeshifting was so prevalent in Norse literature that specific terms became associated with it—*hugr, hamr,* and *hamhleypa*—terms that distinguish transformation between body and soul. The *hugr,* or soul, could leave its body behind and inhabit a new form, a *hamr,* literally 'skin' of a beast or object, and in this new form could travel great distances. The ability for a *hugr* to inhabit a *hamr* was known as *hamhleypa*: an individual leaping into a *hamr*. However, during *hamhleypa,* the *hugr* left its original body in a somnolent, vulnerable state. In these types of transformation, the spirit proves to be the animating force, and by leaving the body in order to assume a *hamr*, drains the life force from the body. Norse literature, along with classical and biblical precedents, and medieval interpretations of these, relates transformation with the body and spirit.

Concepts of transformation inherited by romance draw on, as we have seen, an array of sources. These stem from classical literature and philosophy, to biblical tenets, to their implementation by the early Church, to the Church's changing views on bodies and souls, to fears surrounding transformative power in natural magic and black magic, demons and angels, to the vicissitudes of transformation displayed in hagiographies and Celtic and Norse Legends, to the twelfth century with its influence of Arabic learning, translations of Ovid, and increase of stories of metamorphoses. Every one of these sprawling traditions relates transformation to both the body and soul. Transformation, then, as inherited by Middle English literature, comes from a tradition that speaks both to the body and to the soul.

Sacred and Secular

Because Christian thought pervades so extensively into transformations of the body and the spirit, and because these transformations are depicted in the secular genre of romance, this thesis addresses the relation of the sacred and the secular. The sacred

and secular have already been broached in discussions of magic and the supernatural in romance. Most discussions of the conflations of sacred and secular centre on the Grail Quest or *The Romance of the Rose* and question how far to carry Christian symbolism and whether this supersedes other interpretations.[90] In English romances, religion features more prominently than in Continental romances.[91] English romances adopt hagiographic plot lines and may hover around religious principles. One group of these romances has been coined 'hagiographic' or 'homiletic' romances, and in the past they have received scant attention. Andrea Hopkins, in her seminal work on penance in medieval romance, rescues hagiographic romances from the sidelines of academic scholarship by demonstrating how these penitential romances consider aspects of religion and courtly society that other genres, though they consider similar themes, do not.[92] Regarding specific plot motifs, scholars such as Elizabeth Leigh Smith, Anne B. Thompson, Kathryn Hume, and Diana Childress have signalled the conference between the two genres.[93] However, no volume yet exists on the overlap between romance and hagiography, especially in comparison to studies on romance and epic or the *chanson de geste*.[94] While this is not the principal aim of this study, this thesis does demonstrate that the importance hagiography places on body and spirit, agency and transformation, manifests itself in similar ways in romance. Further, I argue that romance drew considerably on hagiography

[90] For a recent discussion of this, see Barbara Newman, *Medieval Crossover: Reading the Secular Against the Sacred* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013).
[91]Crane, p. 92.
[92] Andrea Hopkins, *The Sinful Knights: A Study of Middle English Penitential Romance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990).
[93] Elizabeth Leigh Smith, *Middle English Hagiography and Romance in Fifteenth-Century England: From Competition to Critique* (Lewiston, NY: Edwin Mellen Press, 2002); Anne B. Thompson, *Everyday Saints and the Art of Narrative in the South English Legendary* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003); Kathryn Hume, 'Structure and Perspective: Romance and Hagiographic Features in the Amicus and Amelius Story', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology,* 69 (1970), 89-107; Diana Childress, 'Between Romance and Legend: Secular Hagiography in Middle English Literature', *Philological Quarterly,* 57 (1978), 311-22; and *Christianity and Romance,* ed. by Field, Hardman, and Sweeney. For a more general motif-index, see Antti Aarne, *The Types of Folktale: A Classification and Bibliography*, trans. and enlarged by Stith Thompson (Helsinki: Academia Scientarum Fennica, 1961); as well as *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*, ed. and rev. by Stith Thompson, 6 vols, rev. edn (Copenhagen: Rosenkilde and Bagger, 1955).
[94] Hopkins' work considers medieval practice of penance in hagiographic romances; it only briefly mentions the overlap between the genres of hagiography and romance.

for its articulation of testing and transformation. In many ways, transformation of the body and spirit enables discussions of the sacred and the secular through the presentation of magic and the supernatural, which is one of the principal aims of this study.

The broad argument of this thesis is that interior states correspond to somatic forms. Romances that are more secular consider this form across two persons: the transformed body of one person correlates to a revelation of interior identity or character in another. This relationship is inversely correlated. The more extreme the physical form, the less extreme the revelation of identity. The more extreme the revelation of identity, the less extreme the physical form. As this study progresses toward a more Christian ideology, the need for somatic and interior transformation across two bodies diminishes, until both are localized in one body and the same soul.

Chapters move from the most extreme physical transformation to the most extreme spiritual transformation. The first chapter considers the most extreme physical transformations in romance: that of humans transformed into animals—swans, a werewolf, and a serpent, and the relationship that has on the identity of a Fair Unknown. The second chapter considers a less extreme form of physical transformation: men who have been shaped by 'nigromancy' into Carls, Turks, and Green Knights. This more human transformed form correlates to a greater revelation of interior identity. These transformed men demonstrate flaws in the veneer of perfection of Arthur's court. Assessment by the supernaturally transformed figures reveals temporal power as wanting. The third chapter considers a further lessening in physically transformed states through depicting transformation in the form of women who may or may not be what they seem. This chapter provides a transition from romances that emphasize physical transformation to romances that emphasize internal states. The transformed bodies of these women pose a difficult test as the female body may prove to be maleficent—demonic or faery—and the knight must consider the safety of his soul whilst maintaining proper behaviour. The

difficulty of the test increases the depth of interior moral character the knight displays. The motif of transformed women, both loathly and beautiful, yields a spectrum of moral states within the knights they test. The physically beautiful body of Melusine poses an extraordinary test of moral aptitude. Her human form correlates to the most distinct revelation of knightly character thus far—that of a knight whose moral constitution is wanting, and the physical and spiritual consequences of his failure. The more human the transformation, the greater the revelation of interiority.

Subsequent chapters shift their focus to revealing interior, spiritual states through transformation. As the appearance of physical transformation lessens in extremity, the scale tips toward a revelation of the private interior. The liminal bodies of the fourth chapter appear in completely human guises. Yet these liminal figures come to instil correction in characters they have already found morally wanting. These figures no longer offer tests in order to see whether the knight will succeed or fail; these individuals fail supernatural assessment of morality so gravely that divine agents are sent to them in order to correct their wayward paths. While the physical body of the transformed agent is the one that transforms, these figures, while not harming the individual's body, do influence their fame and fortunes, with transformative effects. This chapter turns, then, from extreme physical transformations to romances that are more interested in the spiritual transformation of the human soul, and will consider *The Awntyrs off Arthur, Sir Amadace,* and *Robert of Cisyle.* The final chapter examines spiritual transformation without the second agent of somatic transformation. The bodily transformed agent has so lessened in physical extremity that it is no longer needed; instead, the spiritual transformation that occurs is written on the body. These somatic transformations are effected by an initial spiritual transformation. This chapter examines romances that correlate the state of one's soul with the individual's physical form: *The King of Tars, St Erkenwald,* and *Amoryus and Cleopes.*

My research into the supernatural in romance reveals the great debt romance owes to hagiography, and how frequently, whether consciously or not, romance adopts hagiographic models of supernatural transformation and testing. The valence of hagiographic, if not Christian, ideologies underscores the conceptions of transformation in romance. Thus, the discussion of magical and supernatural agency in relation to transformations of the body and spirit facilitates discussions of the sacred and the secular. This thesis is underpinned by the argument that romance, in order to articulate both somatic and spiritual transformation, draws on transformation-driven religious ideology, and on hagiography in particular, and that this informs and colours our interpretation of transformations in romance.

Chapter One: Animal to Human Transformations

Introduction

Due to their extreme physical quality, animal to human transformations appear as the archetype of medieval metamorphosis. Numerous animal-to-human transformations are depicted in Continental romance, some of which would find their way into medieval English writing. Around 1200 stories of animal to human transformations are known to have circulated on the Continent, including tales of princes, children, and ladies transforming into werewolves, swans, and serpents. Chief among these continental transformations were stories of werewolves—*Bisclavret, Melion, Arthur and Gorlagon,* and the *Werewolves of Ossory*—and scholarship on medieval transformation clusters around these texts.[95] Middle English attests to the popularity of animal-to-human metamorphosis within and beyond the Continent through redactions of French tales into English. *William of Palerne, Chevalere Assigne,* and *Libeaus Desconus,* English tales with French analogues, feature a werewolf, an assortment of swan-children, and a serpent; and constitute the basis for this chapter. Each romance stems from a French source, but is situated within a wider vernacular discourse of transformation literature.

Middle English stories of animal-to-human transformation demonstrate important correlations between the somatic and identity. Animal transformations in Middle English romance reflect a careful correlation between the person who effects a

[95] See Leslie Sconduto, *Metamorphosis of the Werewolf: A Literary Study from Antiquity through the Renaissance* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland and Co., 2008); Bynum, *Metamorphosis and Identity,* pp. 77-111; Noah D. Guynn, 'Hybridity, Ethics, and Gender in Two Old French Werewolf Tales', in *From Beasts to Souls: Gender and Embodiment in Medieval Europe*, ed. by E. Jane Burns and Peggy McCracken (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), p. 157-84; Miranda Griffin, 'The Beastly and the Courtly in Medieval Tales of Transformation: *Bisclavret*, *Melion* and *Mélusine*', in *The Beautiful and the Monstrous: Essays in French Literature, Thought and Culture*, ed. by Amaleena Damlé and Aurélie L'Hostis (New York: Peter Lang, 2010), pp. 139-50; Lucas Wood, 'The Werewolf as Möbius Strip, or Becoming Bisclavret', *Romantic Review,* 102 (2011), 3-25, and 'Of Werewolves and Wicked Women: *Melion's* Misogyny Reconsidered', *Medium Ævum,* 84 (2015), 60-88.

transformation, the individual transformed, and the person associated with their disenchantment. These transformations into animals all function as a usurpation of power to deprive the rightful heir of his or her inheritance. The agents which initiate this transformation may use magical or supernatural means, and Christian ideology is juxtaposed with illicit practices of magic. However, each of these transformed characters functions to shape the identity of the individual who participates in their disenchantment, an individual who does not know his heritage or identity, who is, in effect, a Fair Unknown. Acquiring this identity, moving from a state of ignorance to knowledge, of isolation to inclusion, of namelessness to named, also functions, in a manner of speaking, as an interior transformation. This relationship between somatic change and revealed identity spans two persons to correlate the body to the spirit. Somatic transformation from animals to humans reveals the identity of a Fair Unknown.

Libeaus Desconus

Animal transformation in *Libeaus Desconus* is presented in the form of a woman made into a serpent, transformed through 'nigromancy' as part of a plot to usurp power, and who ultimately functions to inform Libeaus of his identity. Notwithstanding the demonic associations of serpentine transformations, the serpent functions to reveal flaws within Libeaus. Moreover, despite the illicit nature of transformation, the text describes the lady's disenchantment through potent religious imagery. *Libeaus Desconus* correlates the somatic transformation of one character to the interior identity of another through the revelation of Libeaus' identity: he moves from Fair Unknown (the Libeaus Desconus) to Gawain's son. The Fair Unknown tradition narrates the evolution of an ignorant youth, raised in obscurity, to a successful knight of prowess. Fair Unknown romances occurred throughout medieval Europe, with the first extensive, written treatment of a Fair

Unknown found in twelfth-century France, in Renaut de Bâgé's *Le Bel Inconnu*.[96] Analogues include the Middle High German *Wigalois* (13th C), the Middle English *Libeaus Desconus* (14th C), the focus of this present section, the Italian *Carduino* (14th C), and the French prose romance *Le Chevalier du Papegau* (15th C).[97] Elements of the Fair Unknown story are intimately linked with the coming-of-age story of Perceval found in Chrétien de Troye's twelfth-century *Le Conte Du Graal*.[98]

Transformation in *Libeaus Desconus* concerns a usurpation of power. The narrative opens with the maiden Elene seeking help to release the Lady of Sinadoun, who 'Is brought in stronge prison' (161). However, the nature of this prison is a mystery. Sir Lambard reveals to Libeaus that two 'clerkes of nygremansye', Yrayn and Maboun, have fashioned her prison (1767-84) and in this prison she suffers much. The clerks (practitioners of 'nigromancy') desire to bend her to their will. Through this prison of torment and 'velenye' (1777), they seek mastery over the female body, with a lingering threat of sexual violation, in order to gain rights to her inheritance of fifty dukedoms:

> To dethe they will hir dight,
> But she graunte hem tyll
> To do Mabones will
> And yeven him hi[r] right. (1781-84)

The clerks use the illicit arts of 'nigromancy' to contrive this inheritance. They possess powerful magic, demonstrated forcefully within the Castle Perilous. Their power,

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[96] *Libeaus Desconus* is extant in six manuscripts and may be attributed to Thomas Chestre. See *Lybeaus Desconus,* ed. by Maldwyn Mills, EETS, O.S. 261 (London: Oxford University Press, 1969). MS. Cotton Caligula A II, which dates between 1446-1460, also contains *Chevalere Assigne*, *The Pistill of Susan, Trentale of St Gregory, Isumbras,* and *Emare*—all works this study considers. It has recently been edited by Eve Salisbury and James Weldon, *Lybeaus Desconus,* TEAMS (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2013), but all references follow Mills' edition of Lambeth Palace, MS 306 to line number.

[97] For analogues, see Schofield, *Libeaus Desconus,* pp. 1-55 and Mills, *Lybeus,* pp. 42-60.

[98] For a further discussion on the relationship between the Fair Unknown and the romance, see Neil Thomas, *Wirnt Von Gravenberg's Wigalois* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2005). See also my forthcoming article, 'The Serpent with a Woman's Face: Transformation in *Libeaus Desconus* and the Vernacular Fair Unknown Tradition', in *Medieval Romance across European Borders,* ed. by Miriam Edlich-Muth, forthcoming in Brepols' Cursor Mundi Series (2017).

however, is most fully exemplified in the prison they have wrought for the Lady of Sinadoun.

The clerks have transformed the Lady of Sinadoun into a serpent with a woman's face. After Libeaus defeats the clerks, out of a window appears a 'worme' 'with a womanes face | Yonge […] and nothinge olde' (2067-69). The serpent is a dragon or 'worme' complete with wings, tail, and clawed feet. Positive adjectives, 'yonge' and 'gilte', juxtapose with the negative 'gryme' (2069, 2072, 2074). The description joins the beastly and the beautiful making it strikingly other. In fact, this serpent with a woman's face is a key variation from *Libeaus'* direct source, *Le Bel Inconnu*.[99] In *Le Bel Inconnu*, Li Baius encounters a glowing serpent whose radiance fills the darkened hall (3129-32).[100] Significantly, the serpent possesses the human attribute of a red mouth ('que la bouce ot tote vermelle', 3134). Alice Colby notes that the term 'vermelle', rather than the versatile 'rouge', was 'applied repeatedly to the attractive mouths and lips of both men and women', in addition to descriptions of 'costly garments of silk and wool, shields, armour, and banners.'[101] This human feature transfixes the hero (3183-84) and provides the means for the dragon to achieve her own disenchantment, for as he stares at the 'vermelle bouce', the serpent kisses the knight. The dragon's kiss reworks the *fier baiser*, or fearsome kiss, which features in other romances, such as *Lanzelet,* as the ultimate test of knightly courage. The prowess of chivalry is subverted when the dragon initiates the kiss to effect disenchantment, rather than the knight himself.

Libeaus Desconus reworks the depiction of the serpent with the red mouth in *Le Bel Inconnu.* Helen Cooper, in her work on romance motifs, demonstrates how motifs create

[99] Schofield, *Libeaus Desconus,* p. 205.
[100] Renaut de Bâgé, *Le Bel Inconnu* (*Li Biaus Descouneüs; The Fair Unknown*), ed. by Karen Fresco, trans. by Colleen P. Donagher (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1992), with all further references to this edition by line number.
[101] Alice M. Colby, 'The Lips of the Serpent in the *Bel Inconnu*', in *Studia Gratulatoria: Homenaje a Robert A. Hall, Jr.*, ed. by David Feldman (Madrid: Editorial Playor, 1977), pp. 111-15.

narrative expectations, which the author, by manipulation, could fulfil or deny. The motifs vary within familiar patterns and 'will not always mean the same thing, or in the same ways: on the contrary, what matters most is the variations on the way it is used.'[102] Moreover Sif Rikhardsdottir demonstrates deliberate shifts in motifs engaged with cultural discourse.[103] The Middle English redaction of *Libeaus Desconus*, by replacing red lips with a woman's face, exemplifies this motif shift.

However this image of a serpent with a woman's face was not an invention of the Middle English redactor, but a culturally prevalent symbol of the devil.[104] The serpent with a woman's face originated in Peter Comestor's *Historia scholastica, ca.* 1170, a biblical Latin paraphrase, which achieved such international recognition that it has become known as the 'Medieval Popular Bible'.[105] Comestor provides the psychological rationale for the devil choosing the form of the serpent, writing that the serpent was previously erect like a man, and that: 'He also chose a certain kind of serpent, as Bede says, which has the countenance of a virgin, because like favours like' (Elegit etiam quoddam genus serpentis, ut ait Beda, virgineum vultum habens, quia similia similibus applaudant).[106] Comestor cites Bede as his source for the inclusion of the serpent with a virgin's face; however, the works of Bede contain no reference to this.[107] Nonetheless, Comestor's

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[102] Cooper, *English Romance,* pp. 14-15.
[103] Sif Rikhardsdottir, *Medieval Translations and Cultural Discourse: the Movement of Texts in England, France and Scandinavia* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2012).
[104] James Weldon, "Naked as she was bore': Naked Disenchantment in *Lybeaus Desconus*', *Parergon,* 24 (2007), 67-99 (pp. 73-74); Alice Kemp-Welch, 'The Woman-Headed Serpent in Art', *The Nineteenth Century and After*, 52 (1902), 983-91; John K. Bonnell, 'The Serpent with a Human Head in Art and Mystery Play', *American Journal of Archaeology*, 21 (1917), 255-91; Henry Ansgar Kelly, 'The Metamorphoses of the Eden Serpent During the Middle Ages and Renaissance', *Viator*, 2 (1972), 301-28; Nona Flores, '"Effigies Amicitiae . . . Veritas Inimicitiae": Antifeminism in the Iconography of the Woman-Headed Serpent in Medieval and Renaissance Art and Literature', in *Animals in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Nona C. Flores (New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 167-95; Frances Gussenhoven, 'The Serpent with a Matron's Face: Medieval Iconography of Satan in the Garden of Eden', *European Medieval Drama*, 4 (2000), 207-30; and Shulamit Laderman, 'Two Faces of Eve: Polemics and Controversies Viewed through Pictorial Motifs', *Images*, 2 (2009), 1-20.
[105] James H. Morey, 'Peter Comestor, Biblical Paraphrase, and the Medieval Popular Bible', *Speculum,* 68 (1993), 6-35.
[106] *Patrologia Latina,* 198. 172, as quoted by Flores, p. 168; trans. by Kelly, 'The Metamorphoses of the Eden Serpent', p. 308.
[107] Kelly, 'The Metamorphoses of the Eden Serpent', p. 209; Bonnell, p. 257, n. 3; Gervase of Tilbury, *Otia Imperialia,* I. 15. n. 7-7.

image of the serpent with a woman's face obtained international fame as a result of the popularity of the *Historia scholastica*.

This readership was in part due to its papal approval at the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215, and then designation as institutional compulsory reading for the Dominican Order in 1228 and at the University of Oxford in 1254; over 800 extant copies attest to its impressive manuscript dissemination.[108] With the spread of the *Historia* travelled the serpent with a woman's face, and writers influenced by Comestor's work adopted this emblem. The feminine serpent appears in Gervase of Tilbury's *Otia Imperialia* (*ca.* 1210-1214), Vincent of Beauvais's *Mirror of Nature* (*ca.* 1244), in the *Bible Moralisée* (*ca.* 1250), in Guido delle Colonne's *History of the Destruction of Troy* (*ca.* 1287), and in the *Speculum Humanae Salvatonis* (*ca.* 1324).[109] As early as 1220 the serpent with a woman's face appeared in the architecture of Amiens and Notre Dame (potentially influenced by Comestor himself who was chancellor of Notre Dame from 1164-1178).[110] By the fourteenth century the serpent with a woman's face appears in medieval mystery plays, sculpture, illuminated manuscripts, paintings, and stained glass, and later in reliefs, woodcuts, and tapestry. In addition to visual arts, the demonic image found a receptive audience in England and was disseminated through Middle English texts such as in the *Historye of the Patriarks* (15th C), *A Middle English Metrical Paraphrase of the Old Testament* (*ca.* 1380), The *Mirour of Mans Saluacioun* (early 15th C), the Chester and York Mystery plays, and even *Piers Plowman* (*ca.* 1370-1390) describes the devil as a 'lusard, with a lady visage'.[111] However the earliest occurrences in England are in illuminations, as in the *Grandisson Psalter* (1262-75), the *Holland Psalter* (1260), *Queen Mary's Psalter* (1310-1320), and the

[108] Morey, p. 6.
[109] Flood, p. 72; and Bonnell, p. 269.
[110] Laderman, p. 9.
[111] William Langland, *Piers Plowman: A Parallel-text Edition of the A, B, C and Z Versions*, ed. by A.V.C. Schmidt, TEAMS (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2011), XVIII. 355. For more on the image's dissemination into Middle English, particularly religious texts, see John Flood, *Representations of Eve in Antiquity and the English Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 71-77 (p.72).

Holkham Bible Picture Book (*ca.* 1327-1340) all of which predate the composition of *Libeaus Desconus* around 1350.[112]

The widespread prominence of the serpent with a woman's face therefore offers an explanation for its incorporation in *Libeaus*. The composition of *Le Bel Inconnu* (*ca.* 1180-1230) and *Historia scholastica* (*ca.* 1170) are roughly contemporary. The feminized devil was only in its nascence at the time of Renaut's composition in MS. Chantilly 427, but was widely known by time of the fourteenth-century *Libeaus* redaction. As the image acquired notoriety, it presented a tool for the composer of *Libeaus*, as it did for Comestor, offering psychological plausibility. The leap from personified red lips to human face is not enormous. It eases the practical difficulty for the Lady of Sinadoun to accomplish the *fier baiser* and signals otherness in a striking, yet less awkward manner than *Le Bel Inconnu*. The author of *Libeaus* substituted a prevalent image, which was culturally familiar, but contextually unexpected.

Libeaus, when he encounters the serpent with a woman's face, effectively encounters the devil. The image was chiefly a symbol of temptation. It fostered affinities between femininity and deception, flattery, usurpation of male agency, sexual lasciviousness, pride, and envy.[113] However, in addition to the devil, the hybrid serpentine body has other negative aspects. The serpentine woman recalls the liminal women of classical and folklore accounts of sirens and lamia, Lilith and Melusine.[114] These women harm those they encounter and sexual union with them may damage the soul. Hybrid women could also conceal demonic interlopers functioning as other than what they seem.[115] These women function in romance to test prowess, reveal character, and

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[112] The Grandisson Psalter: British Library, Add. MS 21926, fol. 150v; The Holland Psalter: Cambridge, St John's College K.26 fol. 4r; Queen Mary's Psalter: British Library MS. Royal. 2 B VII, fol. 3v.
[113] On antifeminism, see Flores, pp. 176-88 and Flood, pp. 72.
[114] On serpentine women, see Daniel Ogden, *Dragons, Serpents and Slayers in the Classical and Early Christian Worlds: A Sourcebook* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 97-108.
[115] Joyce E. Salisbury argues that the serpent with a woman's face signifies a cultural shift in the latter Middle Ages fascinated with hybridity. See *The Beast Within,* p. 156-57.

highlight moral deficiency. As Libeaus encounters this serpent with a woman's face, it is small wonder that he quakes with fear.

Magic and the supernatural, visible here in the transformed body of the serpent, reveal the parameters of knightly prowess and force the hero to acknowledge his own limitations. The serpent with a woman's face exposes character flaws within Libeaus. Heretofore, the drive to adhere to courtly conduct and bring honour to Arthur motivate Libeaus, and this 'secular' form of motivation differs from the more religious analogues of *Le Bel Inconnu* and *Wigalois*. *Libeaus* focuses on exploits of battle. Every knight Libeaus defeats, he sends to Arthur in homage. When he loses his sword in the midst of battle, Libeaus' recourse, rather than to pray, is to remember that should he lose, he would defame Arthur. This contrasts to Li Baius who prays for help to find his horse, for help to defeat the second knight, and for protection against devilry (2903-09, 2968, 3090-92). In contrast, Libeaus offers few pleas for divine aid. The text describes Libeaus as a knight who emphasizes chivalric prowess, and it intentionally minimizes religious asides compared to its source material. With a tendency to rely on knightly agency over divine aid established, Libeaus' encounter with the demonically reconfigured dragon becomes of seminal importance. The hero can accomplish everything of his own volition until he faces the devil.

No prior instance demonstrates Libeaus' vulnerability in such clear terms as the encounter with the dragon. As he watches the dragon approach 'his herte ganne falle' (2065) and upon seeing the dragon with a woman's face, his fear is visibly written on his body:

> Syr Lybeous swelt for swete
> There he sate in his sete,
> As alle had ben in fyre;
> So sore he was agaste
> Hym thought his herte tobraste. (2079-81).

This fear induces paralysis. Eve Salisbury, drawing on Barbara Creed, argues that the monstrous-feminine represents 'a daunting mode of female sexuality eliciting fear in the men who encounter it'.[116] This paralysis renders Libeaus' knightly agency utterly powerless—a stark contrast to the romance's prior emphasis on his agency. Libeaus, overcome by fear, cannot defeat the devil. The serpent with a woman's face, as the embodiment of the devil, represents an obstacle that chivalric action cannot overcome, demonstrating weakness, want, and shortcomings of the hero in the face of demonic encounters. The transformed body of the serpent reveals flaws within Libeaus' knighthood. Somatic transformation reveals interior character.

This moment of paralysis and pinioning of his limbs offers the worm the opportunity to approach: '[she] neyhid hym nere. | And ere that Lybeous wiste, | The worme with mouth him kyste (2081-84). This 'fearsome kiss', the *fier baiser*, effects the Lady of Sinadoun's disenchantment. The *fier baiser* is a folklore motif in which disenchantment occurs through kissing that which is fearsome. Roger Sherman Loomis argues that the earliest redactions of this appear in Old Irish stories of female sovereignty and the nation state of Ireland[117]. The hero who successfully kisses a hag is Ireland's true ruler. Loomis argues that the *fier baiser* of loathly lady stories, also prevalent in Middle English romance, influenced the *fier baiser* in tales of animal to human transformation. The oldest romance to feature the *fier baiser* in the form of a dragon is Ulrich von Zatzikhoven's Middle High German *Lanzelet* (*ca.* 1194-1203).[118] The folklore tradition of the *fier baiser* follows strict guidelines of enchantment, requiring the hero to initiate the kiss of the enchanted animal; the enchanted figure does not possess its own agency, but must rely on the hero to divine the correct course of action without outside instruction.[119]

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[116] 'The Monstrous-Feminine', p. 67.
[117] Roger Sherman Loomis, 'The Fier Baiser in Mandeville's Travels, Arthurian Romance, and Irish Saga', *Studi Medievali,* 17 (1951), 104-13.
[118] *Lanzelet,* ed. and trans. by Kathleen J. Meyer (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2011).
[119] Schofield, *Libeaus Desconus,* pp. 199-208.

This is not the case in *Libeaus*. Schofield, when writing on the tradition of the *fier baiser*, points out the abnormality of the dragon kissing the hero: 'Car[duino] agrees with the great majority in requiring the kiss to be given by the rescuer, while L[ibeaus] D[esconus] and [Le] B[el] I[nconnu] differ.'[120] The initiation of the *fier baiser* in both *Le Bel Inconnu* and in *Libeaus Desconus* does not rest on the knight; rather, as Schofield writes, 'he is thus an involuntary instrument in the matter'.[121] Moreover, at this moment the Middle English makes another key change to its source—the snake 'clypped [Libeaus] about the swyre'. The Middle English 'clypped' denotes embracing, grasping, or encircling, and suggests the snake has pinioned Libeaus with its coils. This mastery over the male form coupled with a serpent image implies seduction, temptation, and the Garden of Eden. Both additions suppress knightly action and elevate female agency. Female agency is further heightened by Libeaus' paralysis and the worm's initiation of the *fier baiser*. That the worme 'with mouth him kyste' emphasizes the capabilities of the addition of the woman's face. *Libeaus* draws out the theme of female agency from the Old French and deliberately alters motifs to heighten its prominence. The two variations of the Middle English text suppress knightly action to emphasise female agency and culminate with the enchanted, not the knight, effecting transformation.

Against the backdrop of this knightly limitation, transformation is effected through female agency and described with potent religious imagery.

> And aftyr this kyssynge
> Off the worme tayle and wynge
> Swyftly fell hir froo:
> Woman, with-oute lesynge,
> Sawe he neuer ere thoo;
> But she was moder naked,
> As God had hir maked:
> The[r]for was Lybeous woo. (2085-93)

[120] Ibid., 206.
[121] Ibid., 206.

Transformation is marked through words of creation and restoration. Immediately after the *fier baiser*, the serpent's wings and tail fall off, and she stands 'moder naked' (2091) before Libeaus. The first words she utters, 'God yelde the thi wille', define her as an agent of Christendom (2095). Her description as 'naked | as God hir maked' (2091-92) and 'naked as she were bore' (2134) recall birth, creation, and renewal. Benedicta Ward, describing miracles in the Middle Ages, writes 'for the medieval church there was only one miracle, that of creation, with its corollary of re-creation by the resurrection of Christ.'[122] Therefore all miracles, ever transformative in their nature, are echoes of creation and recreation. The lady of enchantment has been made new through the *fier baiser,* disenchantment, and transformation. This newness of life recalls Augustine's description of the serpent:

> It is also said that the serpent, having forced its way through narrow openings, sheds its skin and renews its vigor. How well this conforms to our imitation of the wisdom of the serpent when we shed the 'old man,' as the Apostle says, and put on the 'new'; and we shed it in narrow places for the Lord directs us, 'Enter ye in at the narrow gate.'
>
> Ved illud, quod per cavernaue angustias coartatus deposita vetere tunica vires nocas accipere dicitur, quantum concinit ad imitandam ipsam serpentis astutiam exuendumque veterem hominem, sicut apostolus dicit, ut induamur novo, et exuendum per angustias, dicente domino: *Intrate per angustam portam!* [123]

The 'worme' of Libeaus issues from Augustine's 'tight space', from 'Oute at a stone walle | A wyndowe fayre unfelde' (2062-63). At the moment of transformation, like the Augustinan snake, she sheds her skin, 'Off the worme tayle and wynge | Swyftly fell hir

[122] 'Miracles in the Middle Ages', in *The Cambridge Companion to Miracles,* ed. by Twelftree, pp. 149-164 (p. 149).

[123] *De Doctrina Christiana,* ed. by William M. Green, in *Sancti Aurelia Augustini Opera,* Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum 80. 6. 6 (Vindobonae: Hoelder-Pichler-Tempsky, 1963), II. 16. 24. 25-30; trans. by D. W. Robertson (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1958), II .16. 24, pp. 49-50. While these citations refer to book, chapter, subsection, and either line (for the Latin) or page (for the English). In addition to Augustine, the allegorization of the snake as a sign of redemption was also evidenced in bestiaries. See *Bestiary: Being an English Version of Bodleian Library, Oxford, MS Bodley 764*, ed. and trans. by Richard Barber (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999), p. 196.

froo' (2086-87). She 'renews [her] vigor' as she stands before Libeaus naked. Her nakedness echoes birth and creation. The Lady of Sinadoun has been made new by shedding her old skin of disenchantment and her transformation embodies the new creation and the redemptive work of Christ.

Moreover, the Lady of Sinadoun reveals the Fair Unknown's identity. Heretofore Libeaus' name meant 'fair unknown'. After his disenchantment, she explains to Libeaus how the clerks through 'chauntement | To a worme they had me went', to be endured until she 'had kyssed Gaweyne […] Or some of his kynde' (2106-08). The enchantment stipulates its means of release, and through its condition of disenchantment, simultaneously functions to reveal the Fair Unknown's identity. While this has been suggested by Sir Lambard earlier in the narrative, the proof of his identity lies in her successful transformation from the *fier baiser*. Her status of transformation links explicitly to identity. Transformation is self-reflexive: by unveiling the body of the enchanted figure, the hero reveals his own identity. Moreover, transformation links body to soul across two persons: physical transformation influences interior states.

In *Libeaus Desconus*, transformation occurs through 'nigromancy' as a result of a desire to master the female body in order to gain unrightful inheritance. The serpent with a woman's face remains a potent religious symbol: she functions as both passive, unwilling agent of devilry and as active symbol of new creation. Within her transformed state, she possesses proof of the Fair Unknown's identity. Through the suppression of standardized religious motifs and through insertion of culturally valent material, the narrative creates potent, unexpected religious significance. The inverted *fier baiser* allows the knight to successfully disenchant the enchanted damsel, albeit through the serpent's agency and not his own.

William of Palerne

Usurpations of power, revelations of identity, a strange coupling of Christian doctrine and illicit magic are all elements of *William of Palerne*, a fourteenth-century Middle English alliterative romance based on the twelfth-century *Guillaume de Palerne*.[124] *William of Palerne* stands in the tradition of medieval French werewolf accounts and features the transformation of a prince into a werewolf by his stepmother. Knowledge of the events of the English redaction relies on the French source, as the opening section of the Middle English text is damaged. The French tells the story of a stepmother who transforms her stepson into a werewolf. He flees to another kingdom where he uncovers a plot of an uncle to kill his nephew, William, and the werewolf steals the child from harm's way. The English text picks up as the werewolf protects the child, ensures William's care and growth, and final safe return into his kingdom. Because the werewolf kidnaps William at such a young age, William does not know his parents or his royal status—he effectively is a Fair Unknown. As the werewolf leads William into a revelation of his identity, the werewolf's courteous behaviour suggests to William that the werewolf may in fact be more than beast. The story unfolds of a powerful friendship between William and the werewolf, who both function, ultimately, to reveal the identity of the other: for the werewolf, to transform back into Prince Alphonse; for William, to inherit and protect his kingdom. Once again, transformation of physical form and interior states crosses between two characters, and this relationship demonstrates how somatic states influence interior identity, relating transformed body to the spirit. Moreover, although illicit magic effects Alphonse's transformation into a werewolf, religious language surrounds his transformed state, shaping powerful, affective imagery.

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[124] See *William of Palerne: An Alliterative Romance,* ed. by G. H. V. Blunt (Groningen: Bouma's Boekhuis,1985); *Guillaume de Palerne: roman de XIIIe siècle,* ed. by A. Micha (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1990); and *Guillaume De Palerne: An English Translation of the 12th Century French Verse Romance,* ed. and trans. by Leslie A. Sconduto (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2004). All references follow Blunt's edition by line number.

In the French source of *William of Palerne*, the transformation of Alphonse into a werewolf occurs through illicit magic, to effect a usurpation of power. Alphonse's stepmother, Braunde, plans to redirect the line of primogeniture to her own son and disinherit Prince Alphonse. In order to ensure 'þat he ne schuld wiȝtli in þis world never weld reaume' (135), she plots 'to bring þat barn in bale botles for ever' (134) through 'nigromancy'. She concocts 'anoynement' wrought 'bi enchaunmens of charmes' (136-37). These she learned through 'þe werk of wicchecraft' of which she was so proficient she 'nede nadde ȝhe namore of nigramauncy to lere' (118-19). These dark arts influence transformation. Through the application of the ointment, William 'wex to a werwolf [...] al þe making of man so mysse hadde ȝhe schaped' (140-41). While this unguent inspires his shift into a wolf's form, Alphonse, however, still retains his human mind. The English version opens by demonstrating that the werewolf retains human reason, emotional capacity, courtly behaviour, and a protective instinct for the child William. Retaining a human mind is important. Even though his stepmother's illicit magic may influence the form of his body, she cannot touch his human reason.

Alphonse's rationality while a werewolf contrasts markedly with the behaviour of werewolves of antiquity. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses,* Lycaon's crimes (intending to murder a god and commit cannibalism) arouse Jupiter's wrath for excessive bloodthirsty behaviour: he transforms Lycaon into a wolf. The implication is that Lycaon's humanity is already so bestial, that his new form as wolf merely matches his behaviour. A more extended classical example appears in Petronius' *Satyricon*, in which a centurion strips off his clothing and urinates in a circle around them, causing the clothes to turn into stone. The centurion changes into a werewolf and rampages among the livestock. The nature of the wolf takes over once he transforms. In both of these classical accounts, bestial behaviour

is embodied in a bestial form, and in the categorisation of Caroline Walker Bynum, denotes true metamorphosis: an absolute shift from one form to another.[125]

A bestial nature of mind, body, and spirit during transformation posed troubling questions for medieval theologians. Throughout the *City of God*, Augustine conclusively identifies the qualifiers of humanity as rationality and Adam's likeness. Regarding Apuleuis' transformation into a donkey, Augustine notes his retaining of rationality. This rationality is key to defining humanity and therefore salvation. The cynocephali, dog-headed men, who bark but cannot speak, Augustine argues, do not possess rationality. This lack of rationality precludes them from the grace of salvation. He stipulates that God alone has the power to transform humans into beasts (such as werewolf), and that demons cannot. What Augustine does emphasize, however, is the demonic power of illusion—to make things seem to be other than what they are—and trick the viewer, or the individual himself, into believing that a man has been transformed into a wolf. Later medieval writers were more proscriptive and denounced belief in werewolves, subjecting such belief to penance.[126] St Boniface records werewolves in a list of works the believing Christian must renounce. In the ninth-century Canon Episcopi, a believer in demonically-powered transformations equates to an infidel, and Burchard of Worms, in his *Decretorum Libri XX*, consigns to ten days of penance on bread and water anyone who holds this belief. Later theologians, such as Aquinas, supported Augustine's statements that such transformations were demonical illusions and magically impossible.[127]

Nevertheless, werewolf stories continued to arrest medieval thought. These transformations at times were viewed in light of Augustine's views: what if God did transform individuals as punishment? Gerald of Wales records such a case in his twelfth-century *Topographia Hibernica,* where St Natalis curses an entire nation and prescribes

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[125] *Metamorphosis and Identity,* p. 29.
[126] For the following examples, see Kratz, 'Fictus Lupus', pp. 62-63.
[127] *Summa,* Ia. 114. 4.

transformation into wolves as punishment.[128] Gerald's text does not state the sins for which these people are punished, merely that every seven years one man and one woman are compelled to become wolves; if they survive this seven-year sentence, two others must take their place. Gerald records how a he-wolf approached a priest to request the *viaticum* for his dying companion. In response to the priest's scepticism, the he-wolf folds back the wolf skin of the she-wolf to reveal the body of an old woman. Compelled more by fear than by reason, the priest administers the *viaticum*. The priest, and other clergymen are far from certain that the priest has adhered to doctrinal policy. In order to justify the priest's morally questionable actions, Gerald asserts that only God could transform this couple. Moreover, he draws parallels between the transformation of the wolves and Christ's own incarnation:

> It cannot be disputed, but must be believed with the most assured faith, that the divine nature assumed human nature for the salvation of the world; while in the present case, by no less a miracle, we find that at God's bidding, to exhibit his power and righteous judgement, human nature assumed that of a wolf.
>
> Non itaque discredendum, sed potius fide certissima est amplectendum, divinam naturam pro mundi salute humanam naturam assumpsisse; cum hic, solo Dei nutu, ad declarandam sui potentiam et vindictam, non minori miraculo humana natura lupinam assumpsersit.[129]

Gerald unites two seemingly disparate metaphors: the liminal, nebulous, and questionable spiritual state of man as werewolf with the supernatural, holy miracle of the Incarnation

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[128] Gerald of Wales, *Topographia Hibernica,* ed. by James F. Dimock, Rolls Series 21, 8 vols (London: Longman, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1861-1891), V (1867) II. 19; and Gerald of Wales, *The Topography of Ireland,* trans. and ed. by Thomas Forester, in *The Historical Works of Giraldus Cambrensis*, rev. and ed. by Thomas Wright (London: H. G. Bohn, 1863), II. 19. These older editions reset their chapter numbers at the start of each book, while newer editions tend to number the chapters continusouly. Thus in other editions this section might also be referred to as II. 52, rather than II. 19. All further references are to Dimock and Forester's editions: the English translation follow book, chapter, and page number, and the Latin to book, chapter, and line. See also, Lindsey Zachary Panxhi, 'Rewriting the Werewolf and Rehabilitating the Irish in the *Topographia Hibernica* of Gerald of Wales', *Viator,* 46 (2015), 21-40.

[129] *Topography of Ireland*, trans. by Wright, II. 19, p. 80; ed. by Dimock, II. 19. 108-112.

of Christ.[130] Gerald equates their transformation to that of Christ himself. Stories of transformation encode for Gerald a powerful spiritual resonance.

However, stories of licit transformation, through the power of God, prove more rare in the Middle Ages than stories of illicit transformation. While Gerald's transformations reside within the means of transformation stipulated by the Church, such concord with doctrine is uncommon. Other medieval werewolf accounts, part of what Caroline Walker Bynum refers to as 'the werewolf renaissance of the twelfth century', appear less concerned with doctrinal proscriptions: Marie de France's *Bisclavret*, the French poem *Melion*, and the prose Latin *Arthur and Gorlagon* all portray the werewolf sympathetically.[131] Instead, in these stories transformation occurs through illicit means. Werewolves such as *Bisclavret* and Petronius's Centurion transform through the removal of clothing. This inherent werewolf, part of one's nature, Kirby Flower Smith terms the Constitutional Werewolf. [132] The second type is the Teutonic Werewolf, whose transformations occur through donning a wolf mantle, as recorded in the Volsung Saga. Kate Watkins Tibbals adds a third category to Smith's delineations: transformation through magic. [133] Magic appears as the chief agent of werewolf transformation in romance. Melion deliberately transforms himself though the natural magic of a stone set in a ring: the white stone transforms a man into a wolf, the red stone transforms him back to human form.[134] In *Arthur and Gorlagon*, transformation occurs by cutting a sapling tied to the life-force of the king, striking the king with the sapling, and reciting the words, 'Be

[130] For a continuation of this idea, see Robert Mills, 'Jesus as Monster', in *The Monstrous Middle Ages,* ed. by Bettina Bildhauer (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2003), pp. 28–54.
[131] *Arthur and Gorlagon,* ed. and trans. by F. A. Milne and A. Nutt, *Folklore,* 15 (1904), 40-67; *Lais de Marie de France,* ed. by Laurence Harf-Lancner and Karl Warnke ([Paris]: Librairie Génerale Française, 1990); *French Arthurian Literature IV: Eleven Old French Narratives Lays,* ed. by Glynn S. Burgess and Leslie C. Brook (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2007). See also George L. Kittredge, 'Arthur and Gorlagon', in *Studies and Notes in Philology and Literature,* 8 (1903), 149-275.
[132] Kirby Flower Smith, 'An Historical Study of the Werewolf in Literature', *PMLA,* 9 (1894), 1-42.
[133] Tibbals, 'Elements of Magic', pp. 355-371.
[134] See Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural,* p. 128

a wolf and have the understanding of a wolf.'[135] Once again, transformation into bestial form relates to retaining humanity. The ring, the sapling, the removal of clothing—all of these evidence means of transformation that violated religious belief.

While these romances eschew orthodox means of transformation prescribed by the Church, they do express concern over man's nature during transformation. All three explicitly note, in concordance with Augustinian views, that the werewolves retain their human mind. Through courtly and loyal behaviour that seems incongruous with a mere bestial nature, these werewolves prove their human status to kings. All three of these transformations occur through devious machinations of wives who exercise power over their husbands' bodies, usurping male power. However, as beasts, these werewolves harm humans, threaten civilization, and beget offspring. Their aggressive actions sit uncomfortably with their courtly behaviour and probe the boundary between this retained rationality and bestial behaviour. Allowing the werewolves to hold onto human rationality whilst transformed demonstrates that these romances are concerned with some aspects of Church doctrine concerning transformation, namely aspects tied explicitly to salvation, even though those these acts of transformation are performed in ways, as a whole, the Church ruled were not possible—through natural powers of stones, inherent abilities, and magic wands.

William of Palerne is situated within this werewolf tradition. The longest of the four romances, *William of Palerne* too portrays a sympathetic werewolf.[136] As in the stories of *Bisclavret* or *Melion*, the werewolf also retains his rationality and exhibits courtly, human behaviour. However, unlike these werewolf romances, in *William of Palerne* transformation is completely involuntary: it is neither inherent, nor deliberate, nor tied to his life-force, but independently imposed upon his form through 'nigromancy'. The motif of

[135] Milne and Nutte, p. 45. However, the king's wife mis-recites these words and instead says 'have the understanding of man' (p. 47).
[136] *William of Palerne* has around 5,000 lines, while the other three average *ca.* 300 lines.

dispossessing an heir through transformation follows other stories of animal transformation, such as *Libeaus Desconus* and *Chevalere Assigne*, so *William of Palerne* is aligned with these. As in *Libeaus Desconus* and *Chevalere Assigne*, the figure of transformation functions to reveal the identity of a Fair Unknown. Yet, *William of Palerne* marries this Fair Unknown tradition with that of a sympathetic courtly werewolf through more extreme means. Even while in a state of unhallowed transformation, enabled through 'nigromancy' (and although this is fictitious, transformation through 'nigromancy' would certainly not have been sanctioned by the Church), Alphonse not only retains his human mind, but also his soul, in order to receive and bestow divine grace.

The werewolf in *William of Palerne* demonstrates his rationality through courtly behaviour. When the werewolf finds the child missing, he becomes sorrowful and distressed ('balfully'; 'reuliche'; 'swowe'; 'dool', 84-89). In fact, when the werewolf finds the child safely adopted by a cowherd, he prays in thanksgiving: the werewolf 'hertile for þat hap to heveneward he loked, | and þroliche þonked God mani þousand siþes' (102-03). The werewolf, despite transformations through 'nigromancy', not only retains a human mind and chivalric manner, but also capacity for religious conduct. The werewolf contrives for the emperor to find William, and the emperor chooses to adopt the boy. William functions as a Fair Unknown with neither himself, nor his adopted carers knowing his identity. The werewolf ensures the child William's safe conduct as he approaches manhood. By emphasising the werewolf's human rationality, in his care and guardianship of William, *William of Palerne* continues to engage with Augustine's qualifiers of humanity and corollary to this, salvation, and as such, Alphonse, despite his bestial form, encodes saintly, salvific possibilities.

The English manuscript breaks off at this point, but when it resumes its narrative, the werewolf quickly assumes his role to protect, sustain, guard, and guide William. William and the emperor's daughter, though the machinations of illicit magic, fall in love,

and in order to evade a political marriage, the couple flee from the kingdom disguised as white bears.[137] The bearskins in many ways effect the couple's transformation into beasts, but their ponderous skins, flight, and hardship of the wilderness, render them in need of aid. The werewolf enters the narrative again to act provide them with food and wine in abundance. Moreover, he diverts every danger from the couple—from a hunter to hounds to the Provost's army—causing them to chase him, the wolf, rather than the bears. He endangers his own life in order to protect and save the couple.

As the couple realise the werewolf's role in their protection, they continually attribute the beast's actions to divine providence. When they receive the food, they interpret the werewolf's actions as 'a gret grace god haþ us schewed' (1870). In thanks for his provision of wine, they pray for his protection (1903-04). When the Provost's army surrounds them, William and Melior become aware of the werewolf's intervention: 'Witterlie þer wist wel þat þei nere bot dede, | nere Goddes grete miȝt and þe gode bestes help' (2408-09). The werewolf's actions are repeatedly described as enacted by God's good will. William and Melior realise, that for their sake, the beast suffers great harm: 'and sei wel for here sake he suffred þo peines' (2404). Moreover, they become aware they owe their lives to him: 'For nere þe help of heven King and þe hende best, | Our lives hadde be lore many a day seþþe' (2584-85). William describes this sacrifice using parallels to Christ (2510). Furthermore, they note: 'Se what sorwe he suffers to save us tweine; and namli when we han need, never he ne fayleþ' (2507-08). It is the werewolf's sacrificial behaviour which causes the couple to intuit that the wolf has 'mannes kynde' (2506). Although the Church condemned such transformations, the werewolf stands for William and Melior as a sign of God's providence. Providence encompasses even the illicit in its divine purposes. Moreover, the sacrificial acts of the wolf reveal his human identity.

[137] For more on this illicit magic, see Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, pp. 131, 158.

The werewolf's sacrificial acts, which are described as enacted through an agent of divine providence, fulfil a single function: to guard and guide William, as a Fair Unknown, into his inheritance and reveal to him his identity. Once William perceives that the wolf has 'mannes kynde' (2506), the relationship shifts to one of intuition and dependence, and the wolf becomes their guide. The werewolf 'wittily tauȝt hem þe weies whider þei wende scholde' (2602) and purposes to lead William into his own kingdom in order to restore William to rightful power and reveal his own identity. 'þe werwolf hem ladde | over mures and muntaynes [...] And al was William landes' (2619-23). These lands are currently ravaged by the werewolf's own father, the King of Spain. In a further usurpation of power, Alphonse's brother ('for him was þe werewolf so wickedli forschaped' 2639) desires William's sister in marriage—a marriage to which William's mother objects—and for which the King of Spain now lays waste William's lands.

The means the werewolf employs to restore William to power become more extreme as the narrative progresses, and this heightens the sense of William and Melior's dependence on the werewolf. When their bearskins become too well-known and the werewolf brings them deer hides, William instinctively understands 'wel bi þe bestes wille' (2574) and fashions new disguises for himself and Melior. Once again the couple shift into bestial shapes, and in these disguises board a ship. These exploits allow the werewolf to lead the couple to the crags of William's castle. In a further, extreme transformative act, inspired by divine agency, William's mother strolls through the castle gardens at night disguised in a deer skin. The werewolf leads the couple to this strange rendezvous and reunites William with his mother. While this partially fulfils the Fair Unknown plot, at this point, neither mother nor son realise their relationship. William, instead, offers himself as the Queen's defender against the King of Spain.

While the werewolf disappears visibly from the narrative as the couple enter society, the sense of interdependence between William and the werewolf is maintained as

William requests that a werewolf be painted on his shield 'þat be hidous and huge' (3218). He becomes now the 'Knight of the Werewolf', just as Yvain is 'Knight of the Lion'. This elevates the werewolf, like the Pentangle on Sir Gawain's shield, the lady painted on Lancelot's, or the Wheel of Fortune on Wigalois'. The werewolf has become such a part of William's success that he orders this wolf be intimately linked with his own heraldic identity. In fact, this link becomes so strong that when William fights as the Queen of Palerne's defender, imprisoning the King of Spain and his son, on the battlefield William is called a werewolf: 'þe king segges were slawe him bifore, | and non miȝt þe werwolf conquere in no wise' (3910-11). William figuratively transforms into the werewolf on the battlefield, restores his mother to her kingdom, and proves himself worthy to redeem his inheritance.

Moreover, the shared identity between William and the werewolf becomes so profound that William names the werewolf as his kin. While the court are feasting, the werewolf enters and makes obeisance to William, as well as to William's prisoner, the King of Spain. The werewolf's courtly behaviour causes the King of Spain (the werewolf's father) to wonder at his nature. William supports this supposition, stating 'For wel I wot witerli, and wel I have it founde, | þat he has mannes munde more þan we boþe' (4121-22). William names his debt to the werewolf. His awareness has reached its culmination when he says:

> For many [a day] hade I be ded and to dust roted,
> nadde it be Goddes grace and help of þat best;
> he haþ me socoured and served in ful gret nede.
> Forþi, in feiþ, for al þe world him nold I fale,
> þat I schal love him lelli as my lege broþer. (4124-28)

He reveals to the court the wolf's role in his protection and as an agent of God's providence. This awareness is so powerful that the werewolf becomes even more intricately connected with William's identity. William secures the ties of kinship by

adopting the werewolf as his 'lege broþer'. He even asks the werewolf 'trust to me as treuli as þin owne broþer' (4360). Their bond is now so strong, and William so certain of his 'mannes munde', that William will give 'al þe welþe of þe world [...] ȝif he miȝt in maner be maked man aȝeine' (4131). William reveals to the werewolf that he considers their relationship as like the intimacy of siblings and that he desires to restore him into a man.

The unlikely unions that have occurred within the story reveal yet another unlikely union: that of powers of 'nigromancy' and divine grace. Corinne Saunders observes that Braunde's magic does not stipulate, but could employ, the use of demonic power.[138] Despite this power of 'nigromancy', Braunde manifests penitent behaviour and tells the werewolf that she can both 'in manhede and in minde' transform him back to himself—a careful incorporation of Augustine's qualifiers for humanity. She also confesses that she intentionally transformed him 'to reve þi riȝt eritage' (4392), usurping power for her own son. However, despite this intentional use of 'nigromancy', the powers of God still have the ability to intervene, though in unconventional ways. Braunde admits that this usurpation of power was against heaven's will: 'God wold nouȝt þat þou were lorne' (4396). It seems that whatever powers Braunde possesses, these, like Alisaundrine's, do not preclude her from Christian interaction. Braunde even correlates the two when she says that she will deliver Alphonse from the power of 'nigromancy' 'þurth help of þe hevene King' (4273). Braunde effects transformation by using a ring, red silk thread, and book, a process emulating the *Picatrix* and 'the kind of ritual magic depicted in handbooks of magical recipes'.[139] The power within the ring prevents against further witchcraft, poison, and poor marriage (4424-29). Braunde binds this ring with a silk thread about his neck while she reads from 'a fair bok' (4442), a combination that effects his

[138] Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural,* pp. 159-160.
[139] Ibid.*,* p. 160.

transformation. Transformation occurs through sensory objects, which Saunders describes as a 'prosaic set of rituals', and the ring as natural magic; neither of these is explicitly demonic.[140] Despite the illicit nature of this magic, divine providence uses it to reveal identity and restore rightful power. Even acts of 'nigromancy' are incorporated and used on behalf of God to achieve his own divine purposes.

However, Alphonse and William have now become so inextricably connected that the revelation of Alphonse's identity leads to the revelation of William's own, as Prince of Palerne. Alphonse confers on him aspects of a Fair Unknown identity, when having been turned back into a man, and ashamed at his nakedness, he requests that William, as the best knight of the realm, come and clothe him. Now disenchanted, the transformed figure reveals the identity of the Fair Unknown. As the court marvels at Alphonse's appearance, he reveals to the Queen that William is her son and that he was the werewolf who stole away her child. Alphonse explains that he did so in order to prevent further usurpations of power: the king's brother and two maids plotted to poison William and usurp the throne (4650-52). The werewolf reveals that he interfered to save William from an injustice such as he himself suffered: 'I ne miȝt it suffer, for sorwe and for reuþe | þat here wicked wille in þise wise ended' (4653-54). Alphonse has conferred on William his rightful inheritance of his kingdom, his identity as Prince of Palerne, and the accolade of best knight in the realm. Transformation of the somatic body reveals the identity of a Fair Unknown. Two transformations have occurred: the physical alteration of form as well as the internal state of ignorance to identity. Somatic forms reveals interior states across two figures in *William of Palerne* and relates transformation of body to spirit.

Moreover the romance exemplifies—and directly equates—the werewolf as an agent of God's grace. This appears at odds with Church doctrine that not only forbade

[140] Ibid., p. 160.

belief in werewolves, but also forbade 'nigromancy', the use of demonically inspired power to effect such transformations. Further to this, 'nigromancy' occurs alongside, yet is also subject to, divine authority. Divine providence in this romance incorporates that which the Church considered illicit. The werewolf's suffering on behalf of William and Melior, 'who ne wiste ne nouyt', is resonate of Christ's own suffering on behalf of his people. In fact the language Alphonse uses to describe his protection of William and Melior has distinct biblical parallels in tone and substance. The language uses strong biblical imagery, that of God leading own people. After a merry reunion with his father, Alphonse's first speech is dominated by the pronoun 'I' to emphasise action and revelation: 'I am þe werewolf (4627), 'I þe barn away bar' (4636), 'I wihse ful wel' (4367), 'I ȝou telle kan' (4647), 'I yeld him here to þe' (4659), 'I þe saved' (4689). This continues until: 'Seþen at a wide water I wan ȝou over boþe' (4699-4700). Isaiah 43 employs imagery of safe passage through troubled waters (43:2). The Psalms also emphasize that Israel is often unconscious of the Lord's protection (77:19); similarly, William and Melior often do not realize how the wolf protects them. 'And left þe loveli white beres ligge in here rest, | þat wisten no þing of þis werk þat was hem aboute.' (2194-95). In this way, the werewolf may be read, in extreme terms, as a Christ-figure, but these sacrificial actions also chime with the hagiographic beast, who functions to protect the saint—such as St Jerome's lion. While the appearance of wolves as helpful creatures is rare in romance, in Alfric's *Passion of St Edmund,* wolves guard the head of the beheaded king of East Anglia until his followers recover it.[141] In this way, the werewolf in *William of Palerne* functions in accordance with hagiographic tropes more than with romance werewolves. *William of Palerne*, whether consciously or not, evokes Christian, hagiographic imagery when describing the actions of the werewolf. The werewolf who saves people from sure death,

[141] See Aleksander Pluskowski, *Wolves and Wilderness in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2006), p. 169.

guides them diligently on the path to safety, and provides for their every need along the way, evoking the protective, guiding, and salvific imagery found in the Vulgate and in hagiography.

Chevalere Assigne

Chevalere Assigne is a romance full of transformations. It describes somatic transformations of children into swans through magical chains and the transformation of these chains into a cup. The physical transformation of the chain to a cup relates both to the somatic form, and the identity of the chain's owner. This cup and its owner preserve and identify the other swan children, and ultimately, reveal the identity of one sibling as 'The Knight of the Swan'. In a contrast to its French source, *Chevalere Assigne* depicts the child Enyas, who becomes the Knight of the Swan, as a Fair Unknown, heightening this revelation of identity. In complex ways, somatic transformation reveals identity and corresponds to interior states. Although implemented through unsanctioned means, transformation in the texts uses surprising religious imagery. In fact compared to *Libeaus* and *William,* which also depict transformation through surprising appropriations of Christian ideology*, Chevalere Assigne* increases the strange conflation of magical and Christian power. *Chevalere Assigne* stems from the French epic *Naissance du Chevalier*, but while this text sprawls over thousands of lines relating many adventures, *Chevalere Assigne* tells only the first portion of this tale in a drastic reduction.[142] The shortened length of *Chevalere Assigne*, at only 300 lines, causes licit and illicit supernatural forces to be juxtaposed with each other.

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142 The text is extant in one manuscript, BL MS Cotton Caligula A. II, which also contains *Libeaus Desconus* and *The Pistill of Susan,* and is written in the dialect of the East Midlands. The romance dates to *ca.* 1350. The source derives from the Old French *Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne: Beatrix*. See W. R. J. Barron, '*Chevalere Assigne* and the *Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne*', *Medium Ævum,* 36 (1967), 25-37, and Laura Loomis, *Mediæval Romances,* pp. 239-52. See also the introduction to *Chevalere Assigne*, in *Medieval English Romances*, ed. by Diane Speed, 2 vols, 3rd edn (Durham: Durham Medieval Texts, 1993), I, pp. 149-70. Subsequent references are to this edition, cited by line number.

142 See Tony Davenport, 'Abbreviation and the Education of the Hero in *Chevalere Assigne',* in *The Matter of Identity,* ed. by Hardman, pp. 9-20.

Transformations, both external and internal, occur within this tight contrast between unknown magic and divine supernatural forces.

This strange conflation of magic and divine power, and ultimately, the causes behind transformation, begins with the Queen giving birth to septuplets. Each child is born with a silver chain around its neck. The removal of these chains causes the children to transform into swans. This denotes an otherness to the children. While the French source provides a rationale for this, that the mother is a faery, the English account, much truncated, makes no mention of Bewtris' faery associations. While the presence of the silver chains suggests magical possibility, the narrative remains scrupulously enigmatic as to this magic's origins. However, even more surprising is that these children, born with the power magically to transform, have been sent from God. Their conception and birth are marked by divine qualifiers (36, 41). Moreover, God has sent Bewtris these septuplets as a punishment, because earlier in the narrative, Bewtris slandered a mother of twins. In the Middle Ages, the birth of multiple children, drawing on medieval fears surrounding conception, seed transmission, and parental sin, was thought to evidence adultery ('Oon manne for oon chylde' 29).[143] For this slander, 'She bere hem at ones | For a worde on þe wall þat she wronge seyde' (196-97). The licit and illicit combine as God sends Bewtris septuplets with magical transformative abilities. The sacred uses the secular for its own mysterious purposes.

The romance draws on legends of the calumniated wife to convey usurpations of power. The birth of the septuplets gives the Queen Mother, Matabryne, occasion to usurp power, and the text portrays Bewtris as a calumniated queen. Matabryne desires to be rid of Bewtris and the septuplets, to achieve political authority: 'Thenne hadde I þis londe hollye to myne wyll' (181). In order to discredit her daughter-in-law, Matabryne

[143] A further discussion on seed transmission can be found in Chapter Five.

substitutes puppies for the babies. She orders that the children be killed and accuses Bewtris of obscene acts of bestiality. Bewtris is falsely accused of sexual sin and imprisoned; this causes Bewtris to appear as a calumniated queen—a widespread motif which appears prominently in the Constance legends.[144] The text even draws this false accusation to the forefront by describing Bewtris as Susannah. In prison, the Queen 'mony a fayre orysoun unto þe Fader made | That saved Susanne fro sorowefull domus, her to save als' (90-91).[145] According to the *Pistel of Susan*, Susannah refuses to engage in intercourse with two lecherous clergymen, who because of her chastity, formally charge her with adultery. In response to Susannah's pleas for a defender, the Old Testament prophet Daniel, divinely inspired, appears as her defender. In a similar instance, Bewtris too prays that God will send her a defender. However, *Chevalere Assigne* rewrites this motif of the calumniated wife. Unlike Susannah, Bewtris is not a blameless individual; in fact divine power intercedes to punish her. Yet, despite her slander, divine power also sees fit to powerfully intercede on her behalf, through miraculous provision of food and through the protection of the children that will rescue her. Divine power then intercedes to help figures who are less than holy; within its punishment is sustenance. The children then prove multifunctional. While they are sent as a divine punishment for her sin of slander, they are also instruments of divine justice.

Despite having been sent to Bewtris as a punishment, and despite their illicit power to transform, the children are saved by divine providence. As a direct result of the queen's prayer, divine power preserves the children in order that one of them may function as her defender. Rather than kill the children, the huntsman, considering his

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[144] Calumniated wives appear in other romances present within this manuscript, such as *Emaré,* and are also in Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale.* Helen Cooper notes how calumniated women were portrayed similarly to female saints. See *English Romance,* p. 296.

[145] For more on *The Pistill of Susan*, see Alfred L. Kellogg, 'Susannah and the Merchant's Tale', *Speculum,* 35 (1960), 275-79. The *Pistill of Susan* is extant in the same MS as *Chevalere Assigne*, and it too is a part of the alliterative tradition. See J. P. Oakden, *Alliterative Poetry in Middle English* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1935), pp. 61-63. For an account of how religious asides powerfully influence romance narratives, see Roger Dalrymple, *Language and Piety in Medieval Romance* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2000).

eternal punishment for such a deed, abandons them by a stream where divine providence leads a hermit to discover them. Drawing on hagiographic precedent, in response to the hermit's plea for succour (110-11), a hind appears to suckle them.[146] Their illicit powers of transformation do not preclude divine power functioning to protect and preserve them. Yet, at the same time, this divine power appears limited. It does not prevent their transformation into swans. Matabryne, discovering the children alive, orders Malkedras to kill them, and as proof of his actions, retrieve the chains from about their necks (136-37). Malkedras disobeys and instead cuts off their chains, upon which, 'Whenne þe cheynes fell hem fro, þey flowenn up swannes' (148). Transformation occurs, as in *Libeaus Desconus* or *William of Palerne*, after an unwanted usurpation of power. The 'rewfull stevenne' the swans make indicates this transformation is unwelcome, and a blatant usurpation of the power of their very bodies.

Swan transformation recalls a host of legends, such as the Old Irish *Children of Lir*; the swan maidens of the Old North *Völundarkviða,* their counterpart in the Old English and Middle High German stories of Weyland, and the legends associated with werewolf transformations. These types of swan-transformation, Tibbals argues, accord with categories of werewolf transformation: the Constitutional, Teutonic, and Magic.[147] The Middle High German account of Weyland, by Friedrich von Schwaben, displays examples of the constitutional, or inherent, transformation. When two doves transform into ladies whilst bathing, Weyland, by stealing their clothes, prevents their return into doves and forces one of them to become his mistress.[148] Swan mantles worn by Valkyries display Teutonic transformation—or transformation by donning a mantle or skin. In the Old

[146] Deer function for divine purposes in hagiography, such as the accounts of St Eustace, St Julian, St Giles, or King David of Scotland. For more on this motif, see Elizabeth Williams, 'Hunting the Deer: Some Uses of a Motif-Complex in Middle English Romance and Saint's Life', in *Romance in Medieval England*, ed. by Maldwyn Mills, Jennifer Fellows, and Carol M. Meale (Woodbridge: D.S. Brewer, 1991), pp. 187-206.
[147] Tibbals, pp. 366-68. On swans being the same as werewolves
[148] See William Henry Schofield, 'The Lays of Graelent and Lanval, and the Story of Wayland', *PMLA,* 15 (1900), pp. 121-80. See also *Graelent* in *Eleven Old French Narrative Lays,* ed. by Burgess and Brook, pp. 349-412.

Norse account *Völundarkvi*ða, Völundr and his brothers marry three Valkyries who possess swan mantles; wearing the mantles effects transformation.[149] Transformation through animal skins touches on other Old Norse depictions of transformation, of *hamryleypa*: the soul, *hamr*, whilst sleeping, may 'leap' into an animal *hugr,* or skin, in order to travel distance or accomplish deeds. The somatic body is left behind in a somnolent state and leaves the body vulnerable to harm.[150] The swan children of *Chevalere Assigne* fit, along with Alphonse, the third category of transformation—that of transformation by magic through a ring, chain, salve, or 'nigromancy'. Transformation for the swans of *Chevalere Assigne* is an unwelcome, abhorrent usurpation of power, a power that resides in their chains and is tied to their life-force; the swans have no control over their existence or removal.

The Old Irish legend of *The Children of Lir* has significant parallels with *Chevalere Assigne.*[151] The Queen, jealous of her husband's affections for his four children, transforms her stepchildren into swans. She accomplishes this through illicit magic: she orders the children to bathe in the lake and then strikes them with a druidical fairy wand. Their transformation allows them to retain the power of speech and their human reason, but the four siblings are consigned to suffer for 900 years until the arrival of Christianity in Ireland. After this time, a cleric adopts the swans, places silver chains around their necks, and keeps them on an altar. The removal of these chains effects their transformation into human form. However, they are so old, they immediately request baptism and die. The relation between *The Children of Lir* and *Chevalere Assigne* remains

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149 *The Poetic Edda: Volume II: Mythological Poems,* ed. and trans. by Ursala Drönke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011), I-III. See also John McKinnell, 'The Context of Völundarkviða', *Saga Book for the Viking Society of Northern Research,* 23 (1990-93), 1-27 (pp. 16-17).

150 Raudvere, *Witchcraft in Europe*, pp. 102-04.

151 It is difficult to trace the exact date of *The Children of Lir.* While the earliest extant manuscript dates to the eighteenth century, the story itself may date between the fourteenth and sixteenth centuries, and oral transmission may date to much earlier. See Hiroko Ikeda, 'Beyond the Borders of Ireland: Ní Dhomhnaill, Jenkinson and *The Tragedy of the Children of Lir*', *Journal of Irish Studies*, 21 (2006), 49-59. For an English translation see *Old Celtic Romances,* trans. by P. W. Joyce (London: Kegan Paul & Co., 1879), pp. 1-36.

uncertain, but the elements found within *The Children of Lir,* of royal children consigned to swans, transformation as a usurpation of power, and the transformative power of the silver chains, provoke interest.

The source of the Middle English *Chevalere Assigne*, in the *Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne*, finds an analogue in the twelfth-century prose Latin account of the *Dolopathos.*[152] The story explains the origins of the renowned Knight of the Swan, or Chevalere au Cygne—a name earned as the result of the mysterious appearance of the knight drawn in a boat by a swan. Allegedly, the Chevalere au Cygne was the grandfather of Godfrey of Bouillon, a historical figure who fought in the First Crusade in Jerusalem in 1099 and whose exploits are recorded in the epic *Cycle de la Croisade*. The *Naissance du Chevalier au Cygne* prefaces this cycle by explaining the origin of the Chevalere au Cygne and associates the swan children with Godfrey of Bouillon and the Swan Knight. Even among these analogues, transformation relates to identity. Both the French and the English accounts narrate the revelation of identity of the Swan Knight through somatic transformation of the children who are turned into swans.

The necklaces whose removal causes the children to transform into animals further relate transformation to identity. When Matabryne orders the silver chains to be welded into a cup, the silver from the necklace proliferates: 'it wexeth in hys honde, and multyplyeth swyde' (158). From half of the sixth chain, he produces enough metal to weld an entire cup. The increase of metal functions as a *signum* and the smith removes the other five chains from the fire. The proliferation of metal reveals the chain's magical properties. The smith's wife posits two interpretations: 'Hit is þorowe þe werke of God, or þey be wronge wonnen' (170). Both are true. The chains have be 'wronge[ly] wonnen' and

[152] W. R. J. Barron demonstrates that no extant French manuscript supplies the direct Middle English source, but that the Renaut versions of the Beatrix cycle provide the closest analogue. See '*Chevalere Assigne*', pp. 25-37. See also Loomis, *Celtic Myth,* pp. 311-19; and Anthony R. Wagner, 'The Swan Badge and the Swan Knight', *Archaeologia*, 97 (1959), 127-38.

indicate a usurpation of power. Matabryne seems to understand the importance of these chains, and their tie to lifeblood, as she seeks to destroy them through transformation. However the behaviour of the metal is also the work of God. Charles Grant Loomis writes, 'without the increase of the metal we may presume that the other children would have remained in their feathered state.'[153] Loomis indicates that miracles of abundance are typical of hagiography; the increase of metal, however, is relatively rare. This miracle preserves the lives of the other transformed swans. The proliferation of metal also signifies life or quickness. The chains provide access to the human, corporeal body and speak to the life-force bound within the chain. The transformative destruction of the chain in the fire as it changes from necklace to goblet irreversibly damages its magical properties. Matabryne's destruction intends a complete severance of human life. She uses transformation to further her usurpations and insure her power.

However, the swans have a remaining sibling who was not present during Malkedras's theft. He remains untransformed and as he grows to reveal his identity, he functions to exonerate his mother and return his siblings to their human form. However, the boy knows nothing of his parents or of his identity. In fact, the Middle English, in a major change from its French source, deliberately portrays him as a nameless, ignorant youth in an evocation of Chrétien's Perceval.[154] The child asks questions about mothers, horses, armour, and martial and courtly conduct. In effect, the text depicts the child as a Fair Unknown. Although the romance does not function within the Fair Unknown tradition, it draws upon these motifs, by exaggerating the child's ignorance, in a key deviation from its French source, to emphasize the revelation of his identity. By depicting the child as a Fair Unknown, the text narrates his progression in knightly conduct, culminating in a revelation of identity.

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[153] Charles Grant Loomis, 'Two Miracles in the *Chevelere Assigne', Englische Studien,* 73 (1938-1939). 331-33.
[154] Davenport, 'Abbreviation and Education', in *The Matter of Identity,* ed. by Hardman, p. 14

God must intercede to bring him into awareness of his identity and to the purposes he must accomplish. An angel reveals to the hermit that the one child 'Criste hath formeth [..] to fyȝte for his moder' (200). Divine intervention functions explicitly in order to exonerate the Queen. As in *The Pistel of Susan*, divine aid provides the defender for the Queen in her trial. As such, divine power surrounds the Queen's defender. As the child departs to the kingdom, he rides on an angel's shoulder (221-22). Following the angel's instructions, prior to combat, the child is christened Enyas, and to further demonstrate that 'well þat Criste was plesed' with the baptism, the bells of the church ring out without any man's manipulation.[155] Divine favour continues to protect Enyas in armed combat and demonstrates that divine power will not be mocked. Malkedras insults the cross, valuing it not more than a cherry and promising that he 'shall choppe it full small ere þenne þis werke ende' (330). These blasphemous words and the rejection of Christian doctrine do not create sympathy, but enforce a type of justice when an adder springs from the cross on Enyas's shield 'and in his body spynneth' (331). Furthermore, fire issues from the cross and blinds him. The child strikes Malkedras, and in an act reminiscent of the battle between David and Goliath, smites off his head.

In this act of victory, enabled by supernatural means, the full revelation of identity appears: this child is, and will become, Chevalere Assigne. Prior to this, he is called 'the child' or Enyas. In this battle scene, twice the alliterative lines are crafted so that the name Chevalere Assigne is emphasized, such as 'Thenne he stryketh a stroke, Chevalere Assygne' (333).[156] This name signals associations with a larger body of literature, such as the exploits of Godfrey of Bouillon, the Swan Knight, and even the Grail Quest. While

[155] Loomis describes how the miracle of the bells normally heralds the death of saints and indicates divine approval ('Two Miracles', p. 332). However, the bells may have another function. In the text of *The Children of Lir*, the end of the swan children's transformation is marked by the ringing of a church bell. In light of this, the bells may have the function of not only indicating divine favour, but also signalling the end of the swan children's confined transformation.
[156] See also ln. 328.

the Middle English redaction makes no further reference to the broader tradition beyond this, the name itself evokes these stories with which the audience or the redactor may have been familiar. With the revelation of his own identity, the child appears before the king and proclaims his mother's innocence, and ensures the execution of justice through the death of Matabryne. The justice is even poetic as the Matabryne is burned on the very fire intended for the queen. The culmination of the revelation of identity and the complete execution of justice, therefore, go hand in hand.

Revelation of identity leads to transformation. As Enyas reveals the identity of his siblings and their fate, tied to the chains, the goldsmith announces that he possesses five of these chains—'þey ben fysh-hole' (353)—and returns them to the swans. 'Fysh-hole', or whole and sound, describes their unadulterated, unmolested state, and according to its usage elsewhere in English literature, recorded by the MED, refers to a complete recovery from illness. The wholeness of disenchantment is reflected as 'Echeon chese to his, and turnen to her kynde' (357). However, the sixth chain is not 'fysch-hole.' The final swan cannot resume the form of his 'kynde' and is destined to be 'alwaye a swanne, for losse of his cheyne' (358). Neither the cup, nor half of the chain reappear; no miracles of divine intervention are requested or invoked. Divine might, which has intervened so powerfully thus far in the narrative, does not do so here. Corinne Saunders writes that 'God is both present and aloof, his intervention finally limited.'[157] In the narrative, divine intervention works in response to the queen's prayers. The queen is provided with sustenance in jail; she is provided with a defender against injustice; this defender is protected from certain death through the provisions of the hermit and hind and protected from usurpations of power through the preservation of his chain; divine intervention surrounds this defender through angelic appearances, supernatural impositions of blindness, and the emergence

[157] *Magic and the Supernatural*, p. 216.

of an adder which ensure his victory and implement justice. Divine intervention limits itself to exonerating the queen.

Chevalere Assigne's limitation of Christian power differs from analogues and redactions. In a later English redaction by Robert Copland, published in 1515 by Wynkyn de Worde, Christian power ultimately transforms the sixth swan into human form. In this account, the chain formed two whole cups, and when the swan is placed between the two cups on a holy altar at mass, it is transformed back into a human.[158] This transformation follows analogues of the *King of Tars*, such as the legend of Eric II of Norway who is born as a lump of flesh and transformed into a baby boy on the altar of St Francis during mass.[159] In the *Children of Lir,* only the advent of Christianity can overturn the powerful druidical spell. The swans are adopted by a cleric and transform into human form once taken from an altar and their silver chains removed. Divine power, so abundant in establishing identity and correcting usurpations of power, even present in the analogues, does not intercede in the final moments of *Chevalere Assigne* to return the swan to his human form.

However, the sources reveal that the transformed state of the swan relates to the identity of his elder brother. The function of this untransformed swan in the French was to draw his brother in a boat, accompany him on adventures, and identify him as *Chevalier au Cygne*, the Knight of the Swan. In this context, the lone swan was not expected to transform, but to reveal identity. It is difficult to determine how much the audience or redactor drew on the knowledge of the Old French sources. The significant indication of the broader cycle in the English work is in the name *Chevalere Assigne.* The lack of transformation of this swan, especially for an audience to whom a reference to the *Chevalier au Cygne* may have been familiar, is not necessarily unexpected. In fact, this is the

[158] See Speed, *Middle English Romances,* p. 152.
[159] For a discussion of this, see Chapter Five.

purpose for which he was formed. What is unexpected, however, is the emphasis on the swan's distress at his lack of human 'kynde'.

The Middle English text, at 367 lines, is a succinct account of its French source. However, the Middle English, in a second diversion from its source, deliberately emphasizes the swan's distress at its permanent transformed state.[160]

> Hit was doole forto se þe sorowe þat he made:
> He bote hymself with his byll, þat all his breste bledde,
> And all his feyre federes fomede upon blode,
> And all formerknes þe water þer þe swanne swymmeth.
> There was ryche ne pore þat myȝte for rewthe
> Lengere loke on hym, but to þe courte wenden. (359-64)

The swan's distress at the loss of his human form is demonstrated through the swan's self-inflicted injuries as he bites his breast until it bleeds. Davenport writes, 'while drastic reduction is his principal strategy, the poet takes seven lines, where *Beatrix* has only four, to describe the distress of the swan and the reaction of the watchers, adding several details, particularly the staining of the water with blood'.[161] These intentional English additions emphasize the distress, permanence, and isolation of transformation apart from the court. The Middle English *Chevalere Assigne* elongates this account to intentionally emphasize suffering and highlight the troubling absence of divine intervention.

The swan's transformed state is rendered even more disturbing through the deliberate use of religious imagery. This image of a bird with an injured breast recalls the pelican, thought to pierce its own breast in order to feed its young. Its actions are those of sacrifice and often symbolised Christ. The image of self-sacrifice has powerful implications: the sacrifice of the one chain allows the other chains to remain whole; only one child, not all seven, need remain a swan. The image of a bleeding bird may also recall

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[160] Davenport, 'Abbreviation and the Education', in *The Matter of Identity,* ed. by Hardman, p. 20.
[161] 'Abbreviation and the Education', in *The Matter of Identity,* ed. by Hardman, p. 20. Davenport also notes that the French *Beatrix* takes over 1,000 lines to recount Matabryne's flight and ends on the positive note of the 'hero's departure in the swan-boat' to further establish justice (19 n. 26).

provoking moments in medieval literature, such as Chrétien's injured bird and Perceval's rapt gaze at three drops of blood on white snow.[162] The contrast between white and red also recalls biblical metaphors of sin as scarlet cleansed white as snow.[163] The ideas of injury, sacrifice, cleansed sin, and even diverted judgment, evoked through the religious imagery, do not accord with the swan's condition. The swan's explicit distress reduces the power of the Christian imagery. The marred chain reads as collateral of Matabryne's schemes to usurp power. While the swan's transformation does have powerful salvific tones for his brethren, indicated in the final lines by their baptism, these are marred as the court witness and finally turn their backs upon the swan's distress (363-64). In the French text, the swan swims away to reappear at Enyas's departure to seek Matabryne's evil brother, in order to draw his swan brother in a boat. The only consolation the English text offers resides within the brother's acquired identity as the Chevalere Assigne, which situates the remaining swan within a larger literary corpus narrating his exploits and those of his progeny, including Godfrey of Bouillon.

Transformation functions to reveal identity. The proliferation of the metal of the chain into a cup marks the chains as other and thereby saves the other chains from destruction. Furthermore, the transformation of the swans leaves out one brother who, after accomplishing the exoneration of his mother, reveals the nature of the swans as siblings. The enduring transformation of one swan indicates the identity of his brother Enyas as the Knight of the Swan and therefore nods to the potential future purposes of identity. Transformation occurs across two groups: the siblings resume their human form through the coming of age of Enyas. The transformed swan ultimately gives Chevalere Assigne his renowned identity. However, divine intervention proves troubling. The

[162] Chrétien de Troyes, *The Story of the Grail (Perceval),* in *Arthurian Romances,* ed by William W. Kibler (London: Penguin Books, 1991), pp. 381-494 (p. 432).
[163] For this use of colour in medieval thought and memory, see Mary Carruthers, *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), p. 10.

proliferation of the metal chain certainly appears a miracle, but its permanent effects of transformation for the final swan is troubling. The chain's sacrifice is necessary for the revelations of his siblings' identity, but any Christian interpretation the reader may infer in the image of the swan's bleeding breast is undercut as is it used to describe the swan's magical and permanent state of transformation. Divine intervention limits itself to the exoneration of the queen, and after fulfilling the purposes for which it was invoked, allows the consequences of unsanctioned magic to remain. It combines the licit and the illicit. The children, though born with inherent magical powers, are still used to accomplish divine purposes. Transformation calls to mind conceptions of God's 'pryvetee' with an unsettling reminder of the permanent consequences of sin. In order to describe states of transformation, the text employs striking Christian imagery that is surprising if not unorthodox. In this way, *Chevalere Assigne* uses the sacred to describe the secular.

Conclusion

In Middle English romance, victims of animal transformation ultimately function to reveal the identity of a Fair Unknown. Transformation combines the licit with the illicit. Transformation, in each of the works, is effected through 'nigromancy'. Despite this, religious imagery and divine power are not divorced from unsanctioned magic. While the clerks in *Libeaus* transform the Lady of Sinadoun through 'nigromancy', they transform her into a creature embodying prevalent ideas of the devil. As she is disenchanted, the imagery is intentionally evocative of the spiritual state of new creation. In *Chevalere Assigne*, the children are born with an inherent condition of transformation due to their chains. However, these children are also divinely sent from God to act as punishment for Bewtris's slander and as the means to effect her delivery from injustice. Divine miracle abounds in *Chevalere Assigne*, yet will not intervene to disenchant the remaining swan. However, the imagery of the swan's bleeding breast is particularly religious and denotes

the self-sacrificing pelican, Christ's suffering, and the enduring consequences of sin. Finally, in *William of Palerne*, the licit combines with the illicit. A werewolf enchanted through 'nigromancy' functions to fulfil God's holy purposes and even parallels Christ. Braunde subjects her illicit magical power to God. Neither the sacred nor the secular behaves in anticipated manners. In each of these cases, victims of animal transformation function to reveal identity. However, more than revealing identity, these narratives speak to the broader treatment of transformation in medieval English romance. These romances of transformation offers an unorthodox mingling of the sacred and secular, the licit and illicit. Romance evokes a world of possibility: of natural magic, of 'nigromancy', of encounters with the faery realm. This, in many ways, is unsurprising: what is surprising is the consistent use of religious, Christian power and imagery in these moments of illicit magic. Transformation depicted through the conflation of the sacred and secular continues to be arresting. It delves into theologically debatable aspects of Church doctrine and positions the illicit as that which, too, can be holy.

Chapter Two: 'Not What They Seem'

The Testing of Virtue Part I: Transformed Men

'Just like a dream—you are not what you seem.' —Madonna

Introduction

The previous chapter examined persons who were transformed into the likeness of animals. These figures revealed the identity of a Fair Unknown, and the texts described their status of transformation through surprising religious imagery. Exterior somatic transformation in one person correlates to an interior revelation of identity in another. The following section continues to look at persons who, through the power of 'nigromancy' or faery, are not what they appear to be. Transformation appears as an extreme, supernatural variation on the human form in the guise of both men (a carl, a dwarf, a green knight) and women (a hag, a faery). These figures test the knight in extreme ways, and the knight's success in these tests often correlates to disenchantment. In fact, testing the hero seems to be the ultimate purpose for these transformed figures, and testing itself aligns these romances within the broader romance tradition. Burrow writes:

> Medieval authors had a particular fondness for such tests and demonstrations. They liked to take an unusually noble and virtuous hero, and subject him to unusually severe strains. It was a kind of moral laboratory work, designed to establish the potentialities of human goodness [....] the hero has been subjected to something approaching an ultimate test of the virtue for which he stands.[164]

Feats of prowess merely disguise an assessment of the knight's interior, and English romance writers particularly enjoyed testing Sir Gawain.[165] Medieval English narratives

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[164] Burrow, *A Reading of Sir Gawain,* pp. 160-71 (pp. 160-61).

[165] For discussions of testing, see Dean R. Baldwin, '*Amis and Amiloun*: The Testing of *Treupe*', *Papers on Language and Literature,* 16 (1980), 353-65; W. R. J. Barron, *Trawthe and Treason: the Sin of Gawain Reconsidered* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1980); Larry D. Benson, *Art and Tradition in Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1965), pp. 44-55; Ad Putter, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight and French Arthurian Romance* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), pp. 149-187; A. C. Spearing, *The* Gawain-*Poet: A Critical Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), pp. 191-236; Lee Ramsey, *Chivalric Romances: Popular Literature in Medieval England* (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1983),

favoured Gawain as the paragon of chivalry over Lancelot, who was much celebrated on the Continent, and chose Gawain as the subject of testing despite his faulty, often lecherous, Continental reputation.[166] Gillian Rogers writes that from Chrétien's works onwards, Gawain 'served as a universal foil, as a model of chivalry against whom aspiring romance heroes had to prove themselves worthy of a place at Arthur's court.'[167] In light of this reputation, these romances often present Gawain as the flower of chivalry, and weigh and assess his character to reveal the flaws of the Arthurian court at large.

A good number of scholars agree that this testing relates to the concept of 'troth'.[168] 'Troth' implies notions of a pledged word, personal integrity, bonds of loyalty, and even the elevated concept of God's own integrity.[169] However, scholars demonstrate that testing could also function in relation to courtesy, chivalry, fortitude, restraint, obedience, irony, or a choice between two virtues.[170] These studies demonstrate the integral nature of testing in romance, the complex moral structures of the romance universe, and the relation of testing to the interior composition of character rather than solely feats of arms.

The tests themselves, while evaluating a variety of attributes, also incorporate an array of challenges: an exchange of blows, a temptation scene in the bedroom, a violation of an oath, fulfilling a pledge. These tests, as Burrow demonstrates, could pit concepts or virtues against each other—such as knightly chivalry against courtly love, as in *Erec et*

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pp. 45-68; and John Stevens, *Medieval Romance: Themes and Approaches* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1973), pp. 95-109, 231-40.

166 See W. R. J. Barron, 'Arthurian Romance: Traces of an English Tradition', *English Studies,* 61 (1980), pp. 2-23 (p. 5); *Gawain: A Casebook,* ed. by Raymond H. Thompson and Keith Busby (New York: Routledge, 2006), pp. 4-9; Benson associates Gawain with lechery, pp. 104-05; and Gillian Rogers, Diane Speed, David Griffith and John Withrington, 'Folk Romance', in *The Arthur of the English: the Arthurian Legend in Medieval English Life and Literature,* ed. by W. R. J. Barron (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 2001), pp. 197-224 (p. 198).

167 Rogers, 'Folk Romance', in *Arthur of the English,* ed. by Barron, p. 197.

168 Burrow, *A Reading of Sir Gawain,* p. 65; Stevens, pp. 64-66; and Baldwin, p. 354-58.

169 Stevens, pp. 64-66.

170 Benson, pp. 44-55, 103, 109; *Sir Gawain and the Carl of Carlisle: In Two Versions,* ed. by Auvo Kurvinen (Helsinki: Suomalaisen Tiedeakatemian Toimituksia, 1951), p. 90; Baldwin, pp. 353-55; W. R. J. Barron, 'Knighthood on Trial: the Acid Test of Irony', *Forum for Modern Language Studies,* 17 (1981), 181-97.

Enide.[171] However, one of the most difficult tests a knight could face was an encounter with magic or the supernatural. An encounter with the supernatural moved the feat of testing outside the realm of chivalry or courtly love and posed a test that often adhered to a different set of virtues. 'Magic and the supernatural', writes Corinne Saunders, 'create rich possibilities for writers to explore the limits of the human will, the relation of body and mind, and the place of the individual within the cosmos.'[172] Figures who are magically or supernaturally transformed open up the possibilities of exploration that Saunders describes through the tests they devise for an individual knight to complete. The following two chapters will examine the ways transformed persons perform their function of testing. These persons who are physically transformed, appear in a variety of guises: a carl (*The Carle of Carlisle)*; a Turk (*The Turke and Gawain)*; a green knight (*The Greene Knight* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight)*; a loathly lady *(The Marriage of Sir Gawain* and *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell);* and a cursed faery (*Melusine)*. All appear in extreme, often otherworldly forms, and Raymond Thompson even describes these characters as 'outlandish'.[173] Chiefly, however, all of these transformed persons are not what they seem. The Carl, the Turk, and the Green Knight are really enchanted knights, while the hags are actually beautiful women. Melusine appears to be human, but combines aspects of faery with a cursed, half-serpentine body. These transformed persons ultimately test the knight through the knight's response to their disguised, often loathly or frightening or supernatural appearances.

While testing in all of these romances, *The Carle of Carlisle, The Turke and Gawain, The Green Knight, Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, The Marriage of Sir Gawain,* and *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle,* involves Gawain and all stem from Irish sources, the Irish sources themselves do not wholly account for all the features of testing present in these

[171] Burrow, *A Reading of Sir Gawain,* p. 162.
[172] *Magic and the Supernatural*, p. 7.
[173] Thompson, 'Muse on þi mirrour...', pp. 201-208.

narratives.[174] The male-centred narratives of testing derive from the Irish *Feast of Briciu* or *The Champion's Bargain* featuring Cuchalainn. In this account, a formidable stranger enters the king's court and demands an exchange of blows; when the stranger survives the blows of beheading, all challengers quail from receiving a return blow, save Cuchalainn, whose bravery causes the carl to name Cuchalainn as the greatest warrior in valour, prowess, and truth. This narrative does not feature testing based on disguise. Female-centred narratives of testing feature the loathly lady and stem from Irish legends of the sons of Eochaid, King of Ireland, who, while hunting, become separated from their party, and being thirsty, seek a spring. However, a hag guards the spring the brothers find and will not let them drink until they have given her a kiss—which only the youngest son accomplishes, and at the *fier baiser* ('the daring kiss'), the hag transforms into a beautiful woman and grants the youngest son sovereignty over all of Ireland. Her appearance tests the calibre of the three sons, and, by successfully passing the test, the prince may marry the lady and become the next ruler of Ireland. These two stories demonstrate key aspects regarding transformation and testing—disguise, beheading, the *fier baiser*—inherited by romance through a liminal figure who comes to test the valour of men.

While the Irish accounts of testing constitute the basis for many of the Gawain romances, two aspects of testing—a test based on obedience and a test which features a character who is not what he or she seems—descend into Western thought from an even earlier tradition—a tradition that was just as popular as romance in the Middle Ages: hagiography and its accompanying religious ideologies. In hagiography, saints too were tested by figures who were not what they appeared to be in order to demonstrate, in extreme ways, the supreme devotion of the saint. Enduring tests was an integral component of the Christian faith, one vividly memorialised through the martyrdom of

[174] For Celtic and Irish sources, see Elisabeth Brewer, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight: Sources and Analogues* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1973, repr. 1992); Kittredge, *A Study of Sir Gawain,* pp. 9-26; Maynadier, *The Wife of Bath's Tale,* pp. 25-42; Kurvinen, pp. 85-107; and Loomis, *Celtic Myth,* pp. 24-67.

the first saints during the persecution of the Early Church.[175] However, with the conversion of Constantine and subsequent legalisation of Christianity in the Byzantine Empire, martyrdom no longer stood as a measuring rod for holiness. Testing of saints evolved to embrace the rejection of worldly comforts, enduring an ascetic life in the wilderness, and severe supernatural encounters. The lives of the desert fathers such as Antony, Martin, and Gregory detail extreme cases of supernatural testing stimulated by objects, animals, or persons appearing as something different than what they actually are.[176] The martyrdom of the early saints, through their extreme endurance of suffering, established a precedent for holiness that was so high that it could only be rivalled by the endurance of supernatural testing. Early hagiographers adopted New Testament ideas of supernatural testing, both angelic and demonic, based on disguise. These two precepts evolved to form two motifs of supernatural testing endured by Christians: testing by demons who employed the guise of 'not what they seem' to tempt to sin; and by divine agents who were 'not what they seemed' to test adherence to Christian principles. Both of these had a Scriptural basis: in the Vulgate, for example, St Paul warns the Corinthians that 'even Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light', which soon formed the basis for demonic testing in disguise.[177] The book of Hebrews provides the hagiographic basis

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[175] Accounts of martyrdoms first appear Eusebius's description of Polycarp's death in the second century, where the supernatural manifests in several ways: a fire does not kill Polycarp and a dove issues from the blood of his wounds. See Eusebius, 'The Martyrdom of Polycarp', in *A New Eusebius: Documents Illustrating the History of the Church to ad 337,* ed. by J. Stevenson, revised W. H. C. Frend (Cambridge: SPCK, 1957, repr. 1987), XV.1-1.2. For early hagiographies, see Timothy D. Barnes, *Early Christian Hagiography and Roman History* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2010); Hans Lietzmann, *A History of the Early Church,* trans. by Betram Lee Woolf, 4 vols (Cleveland: Meridian Books, 1961); Peter Brown, *The Cult of the Saints: Its Rise and Function in Latin Christianity* (London: S. C. M. Press, 1981); Herbert Musurillo, *The Acts of the Christian Martyrs* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972); and Ivor J. Davidson, *The Birth of the Church: From Jesus to Constantine AD 30-312* (Oxford: Monarch, 2005).

[176] Athanasius and Jerome record these lives between the fourth to the seventh century. For an introduction to the desert fathers, see William Harmless, *Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); *Soldiers of Christ: Saints and Saints Lives from Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages,* ed. by Thomas F. X. Noble and Thomas Head (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995); Douglas Burton-Christie, *The Word in the Desert: Scripture and the Quest for Holiness in Early Christian Monasticism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); and *The Desert Fathers: Translation from the Latin*, trans. by Helen Waddell (London: Constable, 1936).

[177] II Corinthians 11:14-15: 'And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness.'

of testing by divine agents where it hints that by demonstrating hospitality to strangers, the Christian may indeed 'be entertaining angels unawares'.[178] Here the nature of testing revolves around discerning the visible world, yet underlying this is a world infiltrated by the supernatural with a dual purpose: both to test the virtue of the saint and to harm the saint's pilgrimage to holiness. Supernatural transformation acts as an assessor of the saint's merit, emphasizing the potential for deception behind appearances.

Demonic testing, originating from biblical warnings of Satan himself masquerading as an angel of light, used transformation in hopes of luring a saint into a state of sin. Demonic tests feature prominently in Athanasius's account of the life of St Antony; Athanasius records that at night, the devil appeared in the form of a beautiful woman in order tempt Antony to sin.[179] However, as Antony successfully resists the devil, the devil reveals his true identity as the spirit of fornication. In further trials, devils transform into an array of wild animals: snakes, lions, bulls, wolves, vipers, serpents, scorpions, leopards, and bears. Antony expounds thus upon the devil's stratagems:

> [W]hen they have no success with dirty thoughts, they use fears to terrify, transforming themselves into women one moment, wild animals the next moment and then serpents as well as huge bodies with a head reaching to the roof of the house, and finally turning into troops of soldiers and an infinite number of different shapes. All these vanish as soon as the sign of the cross is made.[180]

Devils even appear as monks, sing hymns, and recite words of Scripture—all in order to tempt the brothers to sin.

The examples involving Antony portray a world in which the temporal senses are to be distrusted, and saints must adhere to spiritual precepts in order to succeed. In fact,

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[178] Hebrews 13:2: 'Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares'.
[179] Athanasius records the life of Antony in Greek in the years following Antony's death in 356; the most famous translation is by Evagrius of Antioch who translated the work into Latin sometime before 374. The following references are taken from Carolinne White, *Early Christian Lives,* pp. 3-74. For the original Greek, see Athanase d'Alexandrie, *Vie D'Antoine,* trans. by G. J. M. Bartelink (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1994).
[180] White, *Early Lives*, p. 24.

the lives of Antony and the other desert fathers became so popular that they offered a template for what the lives of other holy saints ought to look like.[181] As hagiography increased in popularity, it evolved, disseminated, and popularized notions of testing based on the relation between appearance and reality.[182] Devils appearing 'as not what they seemed' occurs famously in the *Life of St Margaret*: a dragon swallows Margaret, but as Margaret makes the sign of the cross from within the dragon's belly, the dragon bursts into two, and reveals his true form to be the demon Ruffin.[183] In another instance, a woman appears to St Justinia whilst in prison in order to persuade her to lose her virginity. She uses the words of Scripture in order to increase the difficulty of Justinia's tests, asking, 'What about God's command to increase and multiply and fill the earth? I fear […] that if we persist in virginity, we shall nullify God's word.'[184] The ruse is so tempting that Justinia begins to doubt, but by making the sign of the cross and blowing upon the figure, she uncovers the devil's disguise. Similarly, the life of Bartholomew contains both demonic and divine disguises: after Bartholomew's death a master routinely celebrates the feast of St Bartholomew and on the feast day, a devil appears to him in the guise of a beautiful woman; when the master invites her in to dine, she uses all her wiles in order to seduce him. However, Bartholomew disguises himself as a pilgrim, knocks on the

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[181] Benedicta Ward, 'The Miracles of Saint Benedict', in *Signs and Wonders: Saints, Miracles and Prayers from the 4th Century to the 14th* (Aldershot: Variorum, 1992), pp. 1-14, (p. 3).

[182] For medieval hagiography and the supernatural, see works by Benedicta Ward such as *Signs and Wonders;* and *Miracles and the Medieval Mind: Theory, Record and Event 1000-1215* (Aldershot: Wildwood House, 1987). See also *Medieval Hagiography: An Anthology,* ed. by Thomas Head (New York; London: Garland, 2000); Hippolyte Delehaye, *The Legends of the Saints: an Introduction to Hagiography*, trans. by V. M. Crawford (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1907; *Medieval Popular Religion, 1000-1500: A Reader,* ed. by John Shinners, 2nd edn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Thomas J. Heffernam, *Sacred Biography: Saints and their Biographers in the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); *Hagiography and Medieval Literature: A Symposium,* ed. by Hans Bekker-Nielson and others (Odense: Odense University Press, 1981); R. H. Swanson, *Religion and Devotion in Europe c. 1215-c. 1515* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Felice Lifshitz, 'Beyond Positivism and Genre: "Hagiographical" Texts as Historical Narrtive', *Viator,* 25 (1994), 95-114; and Gordon Hall Gerould, *Saints' Legends* (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1916).

[183] For earlier Middle English versions, see the *South English Legendary,* ed. by Charlotte D'Evelyn and Anna J. Mill, EETS O.S. 235, 236, and 244, 3 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1956-59). See also Osbern Bokenham's *Legendys of Hooly Wummen,* ed. by Mary S. Serjeantson, EETS O.S. 206 (London: Oxford University Press, repr. 1971); also in a modern translation: *A Legend of Holy Women: A Translation of Osbern Bokenham's Legends of Holy Women,* ed. and trans. by Sheila Delany (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), pp. 7-27 (p. 15).

[184] Jacobus de Voragine, 'Saint Justinia, Virgin', in *Golden Legend*, Vol. II, p. 193.

master's door, and through a series of theological questions, reveals to the master that the woman is in fact a demon, on which discovery she confesses her true nature and departs to hell; the pilgrim too vanishes.[185] The demons tested the saint's discernment between good and evil, even when the devil appears as an angel of light, or repeats to the saint the words of Scripture. The saint's success laid in adherence to doctrine supported by holy rites, such as making the *signum crucis*.

However, it was not only demonic agents who tested saints. Divine agents could also test the saint—a notion which stemmed from biblical thought that one might 'entertain angels unaware'. This type of divine testing also appears in the lives of the desert fathers. Sulpicius Severus records St Martin of Tours cutting his cloak in half to clothe a beggar, after which he receives a vision of Christ himself wearing Martin's cloak.[186] On one occasion, the angel of the Lord disguises himself as a ship-wrecked sailor and asks for alms from St Gregory three times—and each of the times the saint gives generously to the sailor.[187] Later this self-same angel of the Lord disguises himself as a pilgrim and dines at Gregory's board, yet only Gregory can see this pilgrim, and whilst at dinner, 'the countenance of one pilgrim […] changed again and again: now it is the face of a young man, then was like that of a venerable ancient.'[188] The pilgrim reveals to Gregory that he was also the shipwrecked sailor and that he is an angel. In the first instance, transformation tests Gregory's capacity for generosity; the text notes the sailor even made himself a nuisance, in order to make the test more difficult; in the second, transformation signals to Gregory the angel's divine nature. The supernatural in these episodes tests the saint as a superlative individual, using means by which the saint will not readily distinguish

[185] Jacobus de Voragine, 'Saint Bartholomew', in *Golden Legend,* Vol. II, pp. 109-116 (pp. 113-14).
[186] Sulpicius Severus recorded the Life of St Martin of Tours around 397. All references are to Sulpicius Severus, 'The Life of St Martin of Tours', trans. by F. R Hoare, in *Soldiers of Christ,* ed. by Noble and Head, pp. 1-29 (p. 7).
[187] Jacobus de Voragine, 'Saint Gregory', in *Golden Legend,* Vol. I, p. 172.
[188] Ibid., p. 176.

his or her true nature, appearing to be what they are not, in order to test the saint's response. Divine agents test the saint's generosity to the poor and his or her refusal to favour social standing. In these situations it is angels, the angel of the Lord, or the Lord himself coming to test the saint. The celestial supernatural functions as a superior means of assessment, probing, weighing, and administering justice, which revolves around the biblical injunction: 'As ye have done unto one of the least of these, ye have done unto me' (Matt. 25:40). The saint's desire for perfection exceeds temporal standards of judgement, and causes divine merit to weigh and assess the saint's interior being.

Hagiography developed and popularized the motif of a figure who tests through disguise and who evaluates merit. Transformation as disguise grew to be so popular that it became a stock motif, not only in hagiography, but in romance as well. While this testing on grounds of 'not what they seem' appears in other vernacular romance, England was a particularly hospitable environment for its development. On the Continent, religious literature was largely composed in Latin and differentiated from writings in the vernacular and caused traditions of religious literature (including hagiography) to develop separately from vernacular romance literature. In England, however, Middle English writings developed somewhat later than other European vernaculars and this allowed translations of both hagiography and romance to enter into English vernacular writings at the same time, permitting the vernacular writings of hagiography and romance to develop alongside one another.[189] Furthermore, both genres possess similar features. Both tend to focus on

[189] Paul Maurice Clogan, 'Preface', *Medievalia et Humanistica,* 6 (1975), pp. ix-xi (p. ix); and also Smith, *Middle English Hagiography and Romance,* particularly Chapters 2 and 3. For more on Middle English hagiography, see *A Companion to Middle English Hagiography,* ed. by Sarah Salih (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2006); Sheila Delany, *Impolitic Bodies: Poetry, Saints, and Society in Fifteenth-Century England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998); Thompson, *Everyday Saints,* pp. 3-21; Karen Winstead, *Virgin Martyrs: Legends of Sainthood in Late Medieval England* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1997); Eamon Duffy, *The Stripping of the Altars: Traditional Religion in England, c. 1400-1580* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992); Andrew Brown, *Church and Society in England, 1000-1500* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003); Paul Strohm, '"Passioun, Lyf, Miracle, Legende": Some Generic Terms in Middle English Hagiographical Narrative', *The Chaucer Review,* 10 (1975), 62-75; Manfred Görlach, 'Middle English Legends, 1220-1530', in *Hagiographies: Histoire internationale de la littérature hagiographique latine et vernaculaire en Occident, des Origines à 1550,* ed. by Guy Philippart, 6 vols (Turnhout: Brepols, 1994), Vol. I, pp. 429-85, and *Studies in Middle English Saint's Legends*

one individual, are set in an idealized past, and depict a universe where encounters with the supernatural are to be expected.[190] In fact, the similar narrative structures allowed romance writers to adopt stories from hagiography, such as *St Eustace* into *Sir Isumbras, St Alexis* into *Guy of Warwick*, and *Amis and Amiloun*.[191] In a portion of these romances, the religious elements are so heightened that some scholars have labelled them homiletic, didactic, or hagiographic romances and consider them as a separate group.[192] By the later Middle Ages, hagiographies drew on motifs from romance, such as *The Life of St Clement*, or the *South English Legendary,* which opens by describing 'apostles & martirs · þat hardy kniȝtes were'.[193] The similarities between romance and hagiography have been noted by a number of scholars.[194] Valerie Lagorio notes the faint, if still apparent, demarcation between romance and hagiography; Derek Pearsall argues that this blurring was deliberate, and David Klausner attributes the blurring between the two genres to a generous borrowing of motifs.[195] Charles Altman discusses how this borrowing of structural characteristics was essential for the creation of saints' lives, and certainly influenced

(Heidelberg: C. Winter, 1998). Notable compendiums of medieval English hagiography include the *South English Legendary*; the *Northern Homily Cycle*; the *Gilte Legend*, *Speculum Sacerdotale*, John Mirk's *Festial;* Osbern Bokenham's *Lives of Hooly Wummen*, and Caxton's *The Golden Legend.*

[190] For similar features between the two, see Derek Pearsall, 'John Capgrave's *Life of St Katharine* and Popular Romance Style', *Medievalia et Humanistica,* 6 (1975), 121-37 (p. 121); and Clogan, 'Preface', p. ix.

[191] For the overlap between these saints' lives and romance, see Thomas Heffernam, 'An Analysis of the Narrative Motifs in the Legend of St Eustace', *Medievalia et Humanistica,* 6 (1975), 63-89; David Klausner, 'Didacticism and Drama in Guy of Warwick', *Medievalia et Humanistica,* 6 (1975), 103-19; Alexander Haggerty Krappe, 'The Legend of Amicus and Amelius', *The Modern Language Review,* 18 (1929), 151-61; Kathryn Hume, 'Structure and Perspective: Romance and Hagiographic Features in the Amicus and Amelius Story', *The Journal of English and Germanic Philology,* 69 (1970), 89-107; and Charles Altman, 'Two Types of Opposition and the Structure of Latin Saints' Lives', *Medievalia et Humanistica,* 6 (1975), 1-11.

[192] See larger studies on romances such as Loomis, *Mediæval Romance*, pp. 3-80; Mehl, *Middle English Romances*, pp. 120-58; George Kane, *Middle English Literature: A Critical Study of the Romances, the Religious Lyrics, Piers Plowman (*London: Methuen, 1951), pp. 18-19; and Ramsey, pp. 214-223.

[193] On St Clement, see Thompson, *Everyday Saints,* pp. 163-171; on the SEL, see *The South English Legendary,* ed. by Charlotte D'Evelyn and Anna J. Mill, EETS O.S. 235, 236, 244, 3 vols (London: Oxford University Press, 1956-59), Vol. I, p. 3.

[194] On the overlap between hagiography and romance, see the Introduction of this study, as well as Matthew Woodcock, 'Crossovers and Afterlife', in *Middle English Hagiography,* ed. by Salih, pp. 141-56; Thompson, *Everyday Saints,* pp. 87-113; Childress, 'Between Romance and Legend', pp. 311-22; Susan Crane, *Insular Romance,* pp. 92-133; Jocelyn Wogan-Browne, '"Bet ... to ... rede on holy seyntes lyvyes...": Romance and Hagiography Again', in *Readings in Medieval English,* ed. by Meale, pp. 83-97; and Andrea Hopkins, *Sinful Knights,* pp. 12-20.

[195] Valerie Lagorio, 'The Joseph of Arimathie: English Hagiography in Transition', *Medievalia et Humanistica,* 6 (1975), 91-101 (p. 100); Pearsall, 'John Capgrave', p. 121; and Klausner, 'Didacticism', p.103.

vernacular romance; Helen Cooper describes the propensity for motifs to be re-used, re-cast, and re-interpreted.[196] A borrowing and overlap of motifs certainly occurs between hagiography and romance. In fact, this cross-fertilization may be a particularly English phenomenon. Susan Crane writes, 'On the continent, by contrast, romances rarely incorporate motifs or standards of value from saints' lives.'[197] Informed by the scholarship on romance testing and on romance and hagiography, this chapter argues that the motifs of testing through figures who are not what they seem, which appears so prevalently in romance, draws on similar notions of testing found in hagiography: both narratives revolve around episodes of testing; both test through a transformed person whose appearance belies their true nature; both function to test the hero and reveal their moral calibre.

In the following chapters, I will demonstrate how Middle English romances employ hagiography's principles for testing, principles which, more often than not, revolve around supernatural transformation, disguise, and persons who are not what they seem. The Carl, the Turk, the Green Knight, the loathly ladies, and the faery Melusine—all test, and often explicitly state that they intend to test, knightly merit. This testing of merit, as in hagiography, functions as it does in saints' lives, to reveal the interior moral character. The depth of interior revelation in these chapters deepens from the revelation of identity in animal to human transformations. Yet while interior character is scrutinized more deeply, the physical form of transformation is less extreme: in these chapters corporeal transformation is not animalistic but displays variations of the human form, such as a loathly lady or a Green Knight. A correlation then exists between the extremity of the transformed form in one person and the degree of interiority revealed in the other. Thus, to some extent, somatic transformation in one character correlates to a revelation

[196] Altman, 'Two Types', p. 8; and Cooper, *English Romance*, pp. 4, 15.
[197] *Insular Romance,* p. 92.

of identity in another. Transformation occurs across two characters in two ways—one somatic, the other spiritual.

Because of the number of romances that employ this theme, the following chapters divide the discussion. This chapter examines men who have been transformed into transhuman supernatural beings. 'nigromancy', beheading, and transformation all combine to test the knight through extreme and liminal means. The subsequent chapter demonstrates the ways English romance varies the motif of testing through women whose nature belies their appearance, and the dangerous spiritual consequences this could entail.

The Carle of Carlisle

A man of fearsome appearance who tests Arthur's knights by demanding they engage in the act of beheading him stands as a prominent representation of transformation in four romances: *The Carle of Carlisle, The Turke and Gawain, The Greene Knight,* and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.* These romances contain similar motifs—an impossible challenge, an exchange of blows, a temptation scene, a beheading game—and three of the four appear in the Percy Folio.[198] However, the damaged manuscript, the subsequent gaps in plot, the late date of composition, and the uncourtly and almost ballad-like tone have caused these romances within this manuscript to be less frequently analysed than others, and when critics do discuss the Percy Folio romances, it is nearly always in relation to *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.[199] However, since transformation features so prominently in the Percy

[198] Discussions of these texts include Kittredge, *A Study of Sir Gawain,* pp. 85-89, 107-143; Brewer, *Sources and Analogues,* pp. 138-84; Ramsey, pp. 200-208; Rogers and others, 'Folk Romance', in *Arthur of the English,* ed. by Barron, pp. 197-224; and Roger Sherman Loomis, 'The Visit to the Perilous Castle: A Study of the Arthurian Modifications of an Irish Theme', *PMLA,* 48 (1933), 1000-35.

[199] The Percy Folio (BL MS Additional 27879) dates from *ca.* 1650. Some scholarship is concerned with whether or not to consider the folio's contents as romances. Kittredge and Radulescu argue in favour or reading some of these texts as romance, while other critics, such as Garbáty argue for a ballad reading. See Kittredge, *A Study of Sir Gawain,* p. 86; Raluca Radulescu, 'Ballad and Popular Romance in the Percy Folio', *Arthurian Literature,* 23 (2006), 68-80; and Thomas Garbáty, 'Rhyme, Romance, Ballad, Burlesque, and the Confluence of Form', in *Fifteenth-Century Studies: Recent Essays,* ed. Robert F. Yeager (Hamden, CT: Archon

Folio, the manuscript deserves some independent attention in the critical consideration of how testing, disguise, and merit are treated in English romance. It is notable, for instance, that their plots often culminate in the revelation of a flaw in the splendour of Arthur's court.

The motif of testing through false appearances occurs in *The Carle of Carlisle*, one of the Percy Folio texts, one which features transformation in the figure of a 'carle', a pejorative term for a non-gentry landholder, and opens by pitting the apparent chivalry of Arthur's court against its moral character.[200] The narrative portrays the opulence of Arthur's court through descriptions of hunting, lists of Arthur's knights, and emphasis on Gawain as the court's crown jewel—'Sir Gawaine the sheene' (28) and 'Hee was the curteous knight amongst them all' (30).[201] However as Gawain, Kay, and Bishop Bodwin become separated from the hunting party and seek lodging in the Carle's house, the three characters reveal the disparity between the court's chivalric appearance and moral character.

This disparity between chivalric perfection and failure is first suggested when Kay, supported by Bishop Bodwin, threatens to beat the Carle into giving them lodging. Courtly perfection is further marred when the Carle greets the knights with a litany of woes against Arthur who has beaten and wounded the Carle's knights without

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Books, 1984), pp. 283-301. While these romances straddle the Middle Ages and Early Modern era, much of the material in the Percy Folio has a medieval source. *The Carle, The Marriage, The Greene Knight, Libeaus Desconus*, and *Lai de Lanval*—all have medieval origins. For these reasons, although the manuscript dates to the mid-seventeenth century, I discuss these texts as medieval romances. See also Maldwyn Mills and Gillian Rogers, 'The Manuscripts of Popular Romance', in *Medieval Popular Romance,* ed. by Raluca Radulescu and Cory Rushton (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2009), pp. 49-66.

[200] See Ramsey, 204. *The Carle of Carlisle* has an earlier analogue (*ca.* 1400) in *Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle* in National Library of Wales, MS Brogyntyn MS ii.I (formerly known as MS Porkington 10). While the testing plot remains similar in both accounts, the Porkington manuscript does not culminate with beheading and transformation. Other analogues include the Old Norse *Saga of Illugi,* the Old French *Le Chevalier à l'Épée,* and the English *Rauf Coilyear*. See Kittredge, *A Study of Sir Gawain,* pp. 257-73.

[201] *The Carle of Carlisle,* in *Sir Gawain: Eleven Romances and Tales*, ed. by Thomas Hahn, TEAMS (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 1995), pp. 373-91, with further references to this edition by line number. Auro Kurvinen has also edited both Carle analogues (see note above) and Gillian Rogers intends to publish an edited volume of the Arthurian texts of the Percy Folio through Manchester University Press in 2017. See also Sean Pollack, 'Border States: Parody, Sovereignty, and Hybrid Identity in *The Carl of Carlisle', Arthuriana,* 19 (2009), 10-26.

provocation. Furthermore, Bishop Bodwin and Kay harm the Carle's steed. When the Carle strikes them for this conduct, the Bishop objects on the grounds of the privileges his religious office affords: 'I am a clarke! | Somewhatt I can of Christs werke' (267-268). Both Kay and Bishop Bodwin reveal their failure to navigate the complex loyalties of chivalry in displaying in what little esteem they hold their host.

The Carle's unique privilege of unveiling these flaws comes through his powerful physical body, which, whilst ultimately a product of 'nigromancy', combines the gigantesque with the otherworldly. His eyes burn like fire; shaggy locks bedeck his shoulders; his fingers are as thick as pegs and his hands are as large as loaves of bread; he towers at fifty cubits in height (175-187). By his side stand a bear, a bull, a boar, and a lion, which he commands with the sound of his voice. His fearsome appearance and supernatural abilities exceed the normal standards of knightly prowess. As such, he chooses to reveal the knight's moral character through tests and to confront and reprove the elite of Arthur's court for poor conduct. Arthur's court represents the highest form of temporal government and therefore is not often subject to temporal correction. The supernatural thus surpasses the temporal as a means of assessing the calibre of moral standing in romance.

As Gawain behaves best of the three knights, the Carle subjects his moral character to further rigorous scrutiny.[202] Gawain perfectly passes tests of obedience and prowess, but he fails when his private thoughts are evaluated as well as his noble actions. These tests juxtapose feats of physical strength against Gawain's interior merit, and they

[202] Gawain's kindness to the palfrey plays upon the notion 'that unto the least of these so you have done unto me' (Matt. 25:40). In the original context, Jesus is telling a parable with the moral that any kind or cruel action one performs to another human (or in this case- an animal), one does unto Christ himself. In hagiography this developed as a vein of testing, which now appears in this romance. For a discussion on the nature of these tests, see Ramsey, p. 205. For the motifs present in these tests, see Rogers, 'Folk Romance', in *Arthur of the English,* ed. by Barron, p. 204-07, and '*Themes and Variations: Studies in Some English Gawain-Poems',* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University Wales, 1978), pp. 319-45. Analogues for the 'Imperious Host' feature in the Old French romance, *Humbaut*, while courtesy of manners appears in *Ralph the Collier*, and these ideas even feature in Latin *exempla*. See Kittredge, *A Study of Sir Gawain,* pp. 99-106, 305; and Rogers, 'Themes and Variations', pp. 326-26; 333-34.

are based on an internal assessment rather than physical prowess. Gawain first fails when he thinks amorous thoughts about the Carle's own wife: 'Well were that man [...] that ere were borne | That might lye with that lady till day att morne' (221-222). The Carle reveals that Gawain's testing now occurs on a higher level as the Carle demonstrates his supernatural ability to read thoughts—an ability also afforded to saints.[203] In response to Gawain's desire, the Carle reprimands him: "'That were great shame," said the Carle free, | "That thou sholdest doe me such villanye"' (223-24). While Gawain objects that he upheld chivalric troth, 'Sir...I sayd nought' (225), the Carle demonstrates that testing now incorporates aspects of interiority: 'No, man! [...] More thou thought' (226). Gawain's assessment relies not merely on his conduct, but on the quality of his thoughts, and reveals that no part of his conduct, either exterior or interior, is hidden from the Carle's assessment.

The Carle continues to test Gawain's interior merit through exterior conduct. Whilst at supper, Gawain again demonstrates his courtesy by refraining from eating until invited to do so by his host—an aspect of testing heightened in *The Carle's* counterpart, *Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle*—after which the Carle, in a strange test, demands that Gawain throw a spear at his face. Gawain complies with the Carle's wishes.[204] While the Carle ducks Gawain's spear, the force of the blow is so strong that sparks fly from the stone and the spear is buried a foot into the wall. While Gawain obeys his host, he has not perfectly passed the test: "'Saft," said the Carle, "thow was to radd"' (327). When Gawain objects that 'I did but, Sir, as you me bade' (328), the Carle again reveals that once again he has tested Gawain based on the motivations of Gawain's thoughts: 'If thou had hitt me as thou had ment, | Thou had raught me a fell dint' (329-330). Gawain's fault

[203] St Ambrose, St Benedict, St Basil, and St Francis possess this ability in *The Golden Legend.*
[204] Throwing a spear suggests the English sport derived from the Romans called 'tilting at the quintain', in which a quintain was placed on a pivot, where one attempted to strike it with a lance; the best place to mark, if the target resembled human form, was between the eyes—language repeated in *Carle;* each unsuccessful blow resulted in a buffet on the runner's back. See Kurvinen, p. 94.

here lies in intending to harm the Carle ('hitt me as thou had ment'). While Gawain obediently adheres to the Carle's requests, Gawain's intentions actually to harm the Carle reveal a moral failure. Gawain has both succeeded and failed. He has passed the test of obedience, but failed on the interior basis of his intentions.

The tests progress as the Carle orders Gawain to lie in bed with the fair lady and kiss her three times. Gawain complies; however, when 'his flesh began to warme', 'Gawaine had thought to have made infare' (342-343). The Carle reacts to Gawain's thoughts—not his actions—by immediately intervening: "'Hold!" quoth the Carle, "Man, stopp thee! |Itt were great shame," quoth the Carle, "for me | That thou sholdest doe me such villanye"' (344-346). These tests nuance the reader's perception of Gawain's character: while Gawain successfully complies with his host's wishes, he fails three times as a result of the evaluation of his thoughts.

In a penultimate test the Carle reveals to Gawain a chamber full of 'Fifteen hundred dead mens bones' (369). Gawain's fright is not allayed by the Carle's confessions that he and his whelps have slain these men. Gawain, ever courteous, asks his host permission to leave, but at the Carle's 'Nay... wee will first dine, |And then thou shalt goe with blessing mine' (377-378), Gawain obediently remains for a final meal. Gawain does not violate his host's permission for him to leave, which stands as such an important aspect of chivalric rituals that in Malory this violation of leaving without permission functions as Uther's alleged reason for invading the Duke of Cornwall's land. Gawain remains in the face of death. The Carle offers no explanation for his behaviour.

In the final test, the Carle commands Gawain to 'take this sword and stryke of my head' (385). The scene of 'dead mens bones' becomes a graphic means of coercion to persuade Gawain to lift the axe—a visual reminder of the menacing deeds the Carle is capable of performing. Only at the Carle's threats to behead him does Gawain comply. His response, 'your bidding shall be done' (396), offers an odd echo of the Lord's Prayer

'thy will be done' (Matt. 6:10), and Gawain chooses to obey without comprehending why he must do so. At the moment of beheading, the Carle is transformed: 'he stood up a man thoe |Of the height of Sir Gawaine' (398-399). Beheading has transformative effects.

Only after Gawain obeys, albeit imperfectly, all the Carle's stringent and abnormal physical tests does the Carle explain:

> 'For thou hast delivered mee
> From all false witchcrafft -
> I am delivred att the last.
> By nigromancé thus was I shapen
> Till a knight of the Round Table
> Had with a sword smitten of my head,
> If he had grace to doe that deede.' (402-408)

'nigromancy' usurps his human form and endows him with a giant's body. The enchantment's power, lasting for forty years, relates to hidden identity, as only a knight of the Round Table 'with the grace to doe that dede' can bring about his return to human form—a correlation between transformation and identity also present in *Libeaus Desconus*. Yet the text carefully neglects further explanation such as by whom (a step mother?) or by what means (a book, a ring, an unguent?) this power has been effected. In hagiographies, such as in the life of St Katherine, decapitation was often the only sure way to kill a saint who seemed able to withstand a myriad of other types of death. This sure means of death in hagiography contrasts to the new life that springs forth in the Carle. Beheading symbolises the death of 'nigromancy's' control over the Carle's old form.

The Carle now reveals the perilous nature of the game of 'courtesois': those who disobeyed the Carle's bidding constitute the pile of dead men's bones. While the Carle repents of these actions, which seem to be a condition of the enchantment, the chantry the Carle builds for their souls does not quite seem to atone for such atrocities. In the earlier analogue to *The Carle*, the Carle imposes a vow on himself that he will harm all knights until one fulfils his every request to obedience. The Percy manuscript transforms

this: the Carle's testing of knights is a condition of enchantment, and Gawain's response to the Carle's test corresponds to the Carle's physical form.

Gawain succeeds in obedience to the Carle; he fails when the Carle evaluates his thoughts. Yet, the Carle is transformed despite Gawain's failure. This contrasts with folkloric depictions of transformation where the hero must guess correctly the right course of action in order to achieve disenchantment without any help from the the individual transformed.[205] Unlike these folklore accounts, the Carle leads, commands, and threatens Gawain in order to achieve his successful disenchantment. The agency lies with the enchanted.

Transformation occurs across two characters. The Carle's somatic transformation correlates to a revelation to Gawain of imperfections in his character. The somatic transformation of one character relates to the interior revelation in another. The Carle's strange ability to read thoughts elevates the testing to a higher plain. It exceeds testing based merely on 'courtesois'. By evaluating intentions as well as action, testing becomes both more personal and more spiritual. Through his transformed appearance, the Carle reveals that the flower of chivalry's interior character does not quite match his semblance of chivalry.

The Turke and Gawain

The Turke and Gawain represents transformation in the form of a Turk coming to test Arthur's court, and Gawain in particular, through an exchange of blows. The text, although extensively damaged, describes the Turke as a 'burne' (warrior, 12); short in stature ('not hyhe' 13), and broad.[206] Thomas Hahn glosses the Turke as a pagan, while

[205] Schofield, *Libeaus Desconus,* pp. 199-208.
[206] *The Turke and Gawain,* in *Eleven Romances*, ed. by Hahn, pp. 337-58. All further references are to this edition by line number. The text is found in the Percy Folio. For more on the damaged manuscript and its condition, see Mills and Rogers, 'Manuscripts', in *Medieval Popular Romances,* ed. by Radulescu and Rushton, pp. 57-66, and Aisling Byrne and Victoria Flood, 'The Romance of the Stanleys: Regional and National

David Griffith, Elisabeth Brewer, and George Kittredge describe him as a dwarf.[207] Hahn elaborates on the social context of the Turke in medieval England: 'a figure whose lavish dress conveyed his exotic, and entirely conventionalized strangeness'.[208] Either reading—an exotically dressed pagan or a bellicose dwarf—takes testing beyond the realm of chivalry. It moves the grounds of testing to a different playing field—to that of the faery, the otherworldly, the exotic, or the supernatural.

The Turke challenges Arthur's court with a game of an exchange of blows. This test finds its source, as discussed previously, in the Irish analogue of Curoi's castle, which also features in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (*SGGK).* Whereas in *SGGK*, none at court initially respond to the challenge, however, here Sir Kay, 'that crabbed knight', immediately responds by boasting that any knight present 'With a buffett will garr thee fall' (23). As Gawain intercedes to correct Kay's 'lewd' answer, the Turke taunts them both: 'Come the better of your tow' (35). The Turke's test pits degrees of excellence against one another, and although the manuscript here breaks off, when it resumes, it is clear that Gawain has succeeded in asserting himself as the superior knight of Arthur's court by giving the Turke his buffet. Whatever supernatural or even headless possibilities of transformation might have occurred during these missing lines, the damaged manuscript cannot disclose. What is clear, however, is that Gawain's buffet, perhaps inadvertently, has entered him into a contract with the Turke that requires the knight to journey with him into otherworldly realms in order to prove the merit, not only of himself, but also of Arthur's court.

Imaginings in the Percy Folio', *Viator,* 46 (2015), 327-52. Some of the story's features find similarities in Irish analogues. See Kittredge, *A Study of Sir Gawain,* pp. 274-81. See also E. B. Lyle, 'The Turke and Gawain as a Source of Thomas of Erceldoune', *Forum for Modern Language Studies,* 6 (1970), 98-102; and Jean E. Jost, 'The Role of Violence in "Aventure": "The Ballad of King Arthur and the King of Cornwall" and "The Turke and Gowin"', *Arthurian Interpretations,* 2 (1998), 47-57.

[207] Griffith, 'Folk Romance', in *Arthur of the English,* ed. by Barron, p. 201; Kittredge, *A Study of Sir Gawain,* p. 119. Brewer describes him as 'a hunchback or dwarf, rather than a native of Turkey'. See *Sources and Analogues,* p. 179.

[208] Hahn, *Eleven Romances,* 353 n. 10.

The Turke's tests begin with the mundane and rise to otherworldly challenges. The two ride north for two days without sustenance, for which Gawain 'hungred sore; | Of meate and drinke he had great need' (52-53). The Turke appears intentionally to withhold provisions from Gawain in a tit-for-tat exchange as he accuses Gawain of violating rituals of hospitality at Arthur's court: 'Yesterday thou wast served with dainty, | And noe part thou wold give me' (58-59). Arthur's court, while willingly engaging in feats of prowess, has neglected routine acts of hospitality. Offering hospitality to an exotic stranger appears in the late fifteenth-century redaction *The Greene Knight*, but the roots of the importance of hospitality stem from classical and biblical texts. Hospitality is also used as a test of merit in hagiography: those who fail to feed the hungry are excluded from the kingdom of heaven, for they have failed 'to do unto the least of these' (Matt. 25:40). While scholars have noted the scene of the Green Knight supping with the court before the exchange of blows as comic, it nevertheless attests to the importance of rituals of hospitality, which, when neglected, violate codes of chivalry.[209] For the Turke, this failure of hospitality demonstrates a fault in Arthur's court at large—a failure the Turke wishes to test and expose:

> 'I wold I had King Arthur heere,
> And many of thy fellowes in fere
> That behaves to try mastery.' (63-65)

The Turke's contract only engages to test Gawain, but as Gawain represents the height of Arthur's court and 'the better of tow', the faults present in Gawain mirror the vices in the court at large.

The Turke increases the degree of testing by ushering Gawain into an otherworld through a fissure in the earth, which 'opened and closed againe' (67), recalling the rock

[209] For more on the importance of medieval hospitality and its role in romance, see Putter, *Sir Gawain […] and French Arthurian Romance,* pp. 51-99; and Gillian Rogers, *'The Grene Knight',* in *A Companion to the* Gawain-*Poet,* ed. by Derek Brewer and Jonathan Gibson (Rochester, NY: D. S. Brewer, 1997), pp. 365-372 (p. 367).

crevice by which Sir Orfeo enters the faery realm. They are greeted by inclement weather—lightning, thunder, snow, and rain—which signifies its otherworldly nature, an impression strengthened as they enter a castle's banquet hall, complete with tables richly laid with food. The rock and inclement weather indicate a threshold, and Hahn notes that this storm seems a preliminary test of entrance into this new realm.[210] Gawain's hunger, now extreme, causes him to intend to violate further rituals of hospitality. Rather than wait until invited to eat by his host, Gawain 'wold have fallen to that fare' (86) were it not for the Turke's intervention, at which Gawain, in a statement reminiscent of Esaus' rash promise, claims that he will give 'all the gold in Christenty' to eat his fill (97).[211] Aisling Byrne notes the potentially perilous consequences of eating food from the otherworld—often an inability to return home.[212] In both episodes of *The Carle of Carlisle,* the prepared feast is a test of courtesy, and by refraining from eating until bidden to do so by his host, unlike Kay and Bishop Bodwin, Gawain demonstrates exemplary manners. Gawain's hunger blinds him to the nature of the otherworld, elicits further flaws in his character, demonstrates his slavery to fleshly desires, and reveals the breaking point to his adherence of courtly conduct. Yet not even satisfying Gawain's appetite restores him to total adherence to chivalric conduct. After dinner, Gawain further violates codes of chivalry by begging that the Turke 'Give me my buffett and let me goe my way. | I wold not longer be hereatt' (111-12). Gawain refuses to engage in one of the most basic precepts of romance: to face with courage 'the adventure that God has sent'.[213] Gawain would rather depart than encounter *aventure*—a far cry from chivalry's exemplum. Gawain has

[210] Hahn, 353 n. 77
[211] Esau gave up his birth-right as Isaac's firstborn son for a bowl of stew. See Genesis 25.
[212] See Aisling Byrne, *Otherworlds: Fantasy and History in Medieval Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 48-52. This danger is archetypically depicted in Homer's Circe (*Odyssey,* Bk. 10) and the myth of Persephone and Hades.
[213] For a discussion of this motif, see Cooper, *English Romance,* pp. 45-105.

already failed in rituals of hospitality, courtly conduct, and proper decorum regarding meals and hosts; now he fails on the basis of chivalric prowess.

Rather than comply with Gawain's request, the Turke heightens the degree of testing by forcing Gawain to an even more remote location: the Isle of Man. The journey by water marks a further removal from courtly society to the other world, and the Turke emphasizes the strangeness of their destination by warning Gawain of what they will encounter: the King of Man, and his court of giants. The Turke requires Gawain to engage in the tests devised by the King of Man, but emphasizes that 'I shall helpe you in time of need' (147). While Gawain will now face a set of supernatural tests, he will also have supernatural aid. The testing has shifted from courtly manners to an otherworld where survival may lie not in feats of arms, but in obedience and the ability to request help.

On their arrival on the Isle of Man, the romance circles again to question the reputation of Arthur's court. Unlike the Turke, the King of Man does not wish to evaluate the virtue of Arthur's court; he has already found it wanting. The King of Man offers a moral indictment of Arthur's court, which contrasts with the polished veneer of courtliness offered to the audience at the romance's introduction. The King of Man accuses Arthur's court of moral failure and finds fault in the disparity between outward appearance and interior moral character in Bishop Bodwin:

> 'He preached much of a Crowne of Thorne;
> He shall ban the time that he was borne
> And ever I catch him may.
> I anger more att the spiritually
> In England, not att the temporaltie,
> They goe soe in theire array.' (157-162)

While the Bishop 'preached much of a Crowne of Thorne', he also 'will not let my [the King of Man's] goods alone, |But spiteth them every day' (155-57). The semblance of piety belies a greedy nature within the Bishop, a disparity heightened by his occupation as a clergyman. The King of Man expects gentry to behave this way, and differentiates

between courtly and religious codes of conduct: 'I anger more att the spiritually | In England, not att the temporaltie' (160-61). The King of Man's resentment runs so deep that he proposes to commit crimes that recall Geoffrey's behaviour in *Melusine* or that of Sir Gowther—to burn all the clergy in a fire. The *Carle* also includes Bishop Bodwin, but he is not portrayed favourably either, as he employs his social rank to exempt himself from basic precepts of hospitality. The King of Man elicits failure in spiritual, inward, moral character as the chief flaws of Arthur's court—an emphasis found also in *Carle*. Hahn notes that his anger at the medieval Church, coupled with the manuscript's date of copying, indicate that this may have been an insertion after the Reformation, and Griffith supports this by suggesting the outburst is probably more against 'orthodoxy than evidence of contemporary anxieties about the Church's infringement of temporal power'.[214] In *The Turke and Gawain*, as with *The Carle of Carlisle*, these spiritual failures morally indict Arthur's court at large. If the Turke highlights the failure of chivalry of Arthur's court, the King of Man demonstrates its spiritual failure.

The King of Man's invitation to Gawain to dine further indicates the importance of hospitality even to alleged enemies and highlights the earlier failure of hospitality of Arthur's court. Perhaps as well, this also demonstrates a modicum of character development in Gawain as he refuses to eat until he has encountered *aventure*—a shift from Gawain's earlier ravenous behaviour and desire to avoid *aventure*. The King of Man demonstrates a familiarity with Gawain and Arthur's court by knowing Gawain's identity and relation to Arthur (152-53), and this apparent omniscience causes the tests devised by the King of Man to appear intimate and supranormal. The King of Man tests Gawain because of his reputation as the flower of chivalry, and whom the King of Man intends to slay (228) because of his relationship to Arthur (231). Once again Gawain's testing

[214] Griffith, 'Folk Romance', in *Arthur of the English,* ed. by Barron, p. 202; and *Eleven Romances*, ed. by Hahn, 355 n. 160.

appears as a foil, symbolic of the testing of Arthur's court at large, and tests the substance of reputation.

The King of Man instigates three tests, all of which Kurvinen argues derived from popular English sports.[215] The first is a match of giant-tennis featuring brass tennis balls the size of a giant's fist, so large 'noe man in all England | Were able to carry it' (188-189); and the intentions of the seventeen giants against whom he must play are murderous: all wish 'To have strucke out Sir Gawaines braine' (185). Unfortunately, the text, once again, is damaged at this point, but as the text resumes, the Turke has intervened, stabbed a giant, and allowed Gawain to proceed to the next test. Gawain's human strength has obviously fallen short in this odd feat of supernormal strength, and his success is due not to his own achievement, but to the Turke's timely intervention. The second test, also of superhuman strength, consists in lifting a chimney and setting it down again. This test reveals Gawain's inadequacy to himself as he 'cryd on God in his thought' (215) and then begs the Turke's intervention, at which the Turke easily lifts the chimney and swings it above his head. Again Gawain passes the test not through his own merit, but through outside, potentially divine, assistance provided in the form of the Turke. In Gawain's final test, a giant intends to boil Gawain in a cauldron of lead.[216] The Turke aids Gawain by wearing a cloak of invisibility, and, through this deception, the Turke thrusts the giant into the cauldron 'til he was scalded to dead' (258). Even with the damaged manuscript, the text clearly demonstrates the human limitations of Gawain in the face of the otherworld. The Turke even kills the King of Man, who, at the passing of his three tests, spits on Gawain, for which the Turke throws him into the fire. These strange tests pit Gawain's strength against supernormal feats and cause him to face his human limitations—even though he is the flower of chivalry.

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[215] These tests find their source in popular sporting games of the Middle Ages. See Kurvinen, p. 94.
[216] This image of a cauldron of boiling lead, an otherworldly figure, and pitchfork are images that appear in Dante's *Inferno*, XXI. 55-57. This image is also found in I Samuel 2:12-15.

However, the Turke's assistance comes at a price. In light of all the assistance the Turke has proffered Gawain, the Turke demands, 'If ever I did any thing for thee, | Doe for me in this stead' (272-273). Rather than require a return blow to fulfil their contact, the Turke now requests Gawain to 'Take here this sword […] Therwith strike of my head' (274-276). *The Turke and Gawain* combines the exchange-of-blows motif found in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* with the Carle's request for beheading. Yet unlike in the *Carle*, this beheading involves the Turke's blood being caught in a seemly basin of gold (268-269). This basin constitutes an integral part of the beheading process. Gawain's compliance with the Turke's request differs from his behaviour with the Carle, where he must threaten Gawain with a similar blow. Perhaps the Turke's calm manner of request ('I have no dread' 280) or perhaps his insistence that this will bring forth 'a new play' inspired by the Christian aid of Mary (283-284) calms Gawain's protests, leading Gawain to fulfil the Turke's request.

As Gawain beheads the Turke and the blood alights in the basin, the Turke is disenchanted back to his true form as the knight Sir Gromer.[217] The basin gathering blood recalls religious imagery. The transformative quality of the blood and basin aligns with the Eucharist—the bread and wine that through transubstantiation transform into the very body and blood of Christ.[218] The basin also may recall the Holy Grail.[219] Yet these elements of basin, beheading, and blood find their direct source in medieval alchemy. Lyndy Abraham demonstrates that the gathering of the blood of a beheaded person into a gold basin that inspires transformation from an old form into a new one appears in medieval and early modern alchemical treatises. Alchemy itself involves a chemical

[217] For more on Sir Gromer, see Kittredge, *A Study of Sir Gawain,* pp. 269-71; and Karen Hunter Trimnell, "'And Should Have Been Oderwyse Understond': the Disenchanting of Sir Gromer Somer Joure', *Medium Ævum,* 17 (2002), 294-301.
[218] This doctrine was promoted at the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215 and given philosophical and metaphysical backing by Aquinas.
[219] Griffith, 'Folk Romance', in *Arthur of the English,* ed. by Barron, p. 203.

alteration of base metals into the coveted philosopher's stone through a series of transformations. However, as Holmyard demonstrates, the scientific process of alchemy was also adopted to describe interior moral change, particularly the spiritual transformation of the Christian soul.[220] The coded language of alchemy could describe interior transformation of character through the image of the black, white, and red stages required to produce moral perfection—a symbolic three-step process also employed in *Sir Gowther*: prior to fulfilling his penance, Gowther appears as a black, a red, and a white knight.[221]

The alchemical description of 'beheading', explicitly depicted in *The Turke,* relates physical transformation to interior moral status. Beheading was one of many symbols of the first step in the alchemical process—dissolution of the prima mater's 'nigredo', or blackness. Under her entry on 'beheading', Abraham expounds its alchemical symbolism:

> The mercurial blood or water of life is collected in a golden bowl and used to resurrect the dead bodies… Metaphysically, the decapitation represents the freeing of the soul from the prison of the body so that through detachment it can gain the ability to discriminate between the merely natural man, bound by his thoughts, opinions and desires, and the illumined, philosophical man, freed from these illusions (the 'blackness'). But this understanding necessarily entails sacrifice and suffering, the death of the old outmoded state of being. [222]

The language of alchemy, itself imbibed with the concept of transformation, comes as a natural choice for the compiler of *The Turke* in order to describe the change of an old form into a new one. Abraham indicates the capabilities that become possible through Sir Gromer's new physical form—the ability to discriminate between natural and informed desires. Yet the romance does not depict the evolution of Sir Gromer's character from natural man to wise philosopher, but instead demonstrates Sir Gromer revealing this disparity within Gawain. Sir Gromer illuminates 'the merely natural man' in

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[220] Holmyard, p. 13.
[221] *Sir Gowther* in *Six Middle English Romances,* ed. Mills, pp. 148-168, ll. 409, 461, 556.
[222] Abraham, *Dictionary of Alchemical Imagery,* pp. 21-22.

Sir Gawain—his failure in courtly conduct (hospitality, manners, deference to the host), in codes of chivalry (wishing to refuse the *aventure*), and in physical prowess (his inability to complete any of the three tests devised by the King of Man alone). The somatic to spiritual transformation that occurs within medieval alchemy, the exterior transformation correlating to an interior one, appears across two characters in this romance. The somatic transformation of Sir Gromer correlates to an interior revelation of moral failure and enlightenment in Sir Gawain.

The manuscript does not reveal by what means, whether through 'nigromancy' or the power of the King of Man, Sir Gromer was transformed into the Turke. Perhaps this is due to the damaged manuscript, but the romance simply may not have stated it. What is clear, however, is this transformed state is undesired by the Turke and occurs as a usurpation of power. This undesired transformation is evidenced by the joy the Turke demonstrates at his release from the power of enchantment, in particular through the song he sings as he regains human form, the 'Te Deum Laudamus'—a hymn of thanks that often marked the occasion of baptism, allegedly composed by St Ambrose for the baptism of St Augustine.[223] Baptism itself is transformative as it marks the moment of spiritual transformation from death to life.[224] The hymn's connotations of spiritual transformation are further supported by Dante's inclusion of the 'Te Deum' the moment the pilgrim enters the gates of purgatory—a location devoted to spiritual transformation. A song to mark the occasion of transformation also features in the romance *Amoryus and Cleopes*—for whom transformation is both somatic and spiritual. Hahn notes that this song 'signals his [the Turke's] restoration to Christian knighthood'.[225] The Turke promises Gawain that his transformation occurs through "Mary's power," and this power is attested by Sir Gromer's hymn of thanks. The means of disenchantment present in *The*

[223] See A. E. Burn, *An Introduction to the Creeds and to the Te Deum* (London: Methuen & Co., 1899).
[224] For more on the transformative nature of baptism, see Chapter 5.
[225] *Eleven Romances,* ed. by Hahn, 357 n. 292.

Turke and Gawain draws on alchemical practice yet also simultaneously evokes powerful Christian imagery.

However, divine power does not prevent Gromer's original transformation into the Turke, nor does divine power arrange the means by which he may be freed. The text depicts Gromer's disenchantment with deeply religious imagery—the Eucharist, the Grail, and alchemy with its spiritual connotations of perfection. Yet this divine power is strangely limited, refusing to interfere or intervene to circumvent darker powers of magic and the supernatural over the human form.

Before departing from the Isle of Man, Gawain and Gromer eat of the King of Man's board, and, by consuming the feast, they attest to Sir Gromer's wholeness of transformation. Disembodied heads do not partake of meals. The romance concludes with Gromer and Gawain returning seventeen ladies, who complement the seventeen giants the Turke defeated at tennis, to Arthur's court, reuniting them with their husbands, and achieving the social restoration of a violated community. Arthur offers Gawain the title of the King of Man, and Gawain demonstrates an awareness of his limitation and the debt he owes Sir Gromer when he refuses Arthur's gift.[226] While Gawain does not become the illumined philosopher noted in alchemical treatises, he does gain awareness of his inabilities. In light of this, Gawain says, 'Sir Gromer, take it thee…I never purposed to be noe King' (329, 326).

The Turke ultimately is not what he appears to be. This allows the Turke to test Gawain and Arthur's court on an ulterior level that appears to supersede temporal justice. The theme of disparity between outward reputation and inward moral character ripples through the romance, on a micro-level through Bishop Bodwin, and on a macro-level through Gawain. Testing instigated by a figure in disguise, ultimately to reveal moral

[226] Rogers argues that Gawain's refusal to be king elevates the narrative into courtly romance. See 'Folk Romance', in *Arthur of the English,* ed. by Barron, p. 198.

character, functions on similar principles of divine testing found in saints' lives. The principles of transformation and disenchantment in this romance do not function as they do in folklore—where disenchantment depends on the knight's success. Instead, the romance deliberately heightens Gawain's failure. Gawain does not disenchant the Turke through his own intuition, but through obedience to the Turke's instructions. Indeed, Gawain appears largely passive, which Kittredge notes when he writes that 'the little romance belongs to the more limited type in which the companion or companions perform the tasks instead of the hero himself.'[227] Yet despite this failure, Gawain still acts as a successful ingredient in the process of disenchantment. Transformation appears across two individuals as both external and internal. Romance embraces a complex moral universe. The power that causes Gromer's appearance to alter exists alongside a world of the Christian supernatural, and, while the values of Christendom ultimately triumph, this is effected through testing Gawain, who largely appears as a failure. This universe juxtaposes the sacred and the secular, instigates tests that highlight moral calibre, and achieves disenchantment by subverting chivalric prowess.

The Greene Knight

Concepts of beheading, testing, and transformation are once again visited in the late fifteenth-century romance, *The Greene Knight*—a later adaptation of the fourteenth-century *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.[228] As in *The Turke*, the romance opens by contrasting the opulence of Arthur's court with the challenge and the testing by the Green Knight. The romance opens in an idyllic Arthurian era: Arthur is securely king of the whole 'Ile of

[227] Kittredge, *A Study of Sir Gawain,* p. 121.
[228] Discussion on the relationship between the two texts appears in David Matthews, "'A Shadow in Itself': Narrative and Ideology in *The Grene Knight*', *Neophilologus*, 78 (1994), 301-14; Kittredge, *A Study of Sir Gawain,* pp. 127-35, 282-89; Benson, *Art and Tradition,* pp. 28, 34-35, 98, 169-172, 214-15; Rogers, 'The Grene Knight', in *A Companion to the* Gawain-*Poet,* ed. by Brewer and Gibson, pp. 365-72; J. R. Hulbert, 'Syr Gawayn and the Grene Knyt', *Modern Philology,* 13 (1915, 1916), 433-62, 689-730.

Brittaine' (3)—England, Scotland, and Wales—and it is set in a time of peace at a Christmas feast.[229] As in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, a green knight interrupts this feast, but the air of mystery that surrounds the Green Knight and adds weight to his threat is lost in this later redaction as this knight is given a name—Sir Bredbeddle; a family—a wife (in love with Gawain) and a mother-in-law (the witch Agostes); and the Green Knight's purpose is stated: 'To Arthurs court will I mee hye…And to prove Gawaines points three' (68, 70). The work seeks to explain rather than generate suspense. By filling the narrative with explanation, The *Greene Knight* allows 'the audience to share the omniscience of the narratorial voice and remain ultimately undisturbed'.[230]

While Bredbeddle alters his appearance into a Green Knight before entering Arthur's court, it is unclear to what extent Sir Bredbeddle has undergone supernatural transformation. Bredbeddle's horse and armour are all green, and when Bredbeddle arrives in court the porter describes him to Arthur by 'All his vesture is greene!' (105)—'vesture' noted by Hahn as 'trappings'. Derek Brewer notes that it was not uncommon for a knight's clothing to consist of one colour.[231] The Green Knight could simply be an unremarkable knight marked by his colour, such as the black, white, and red knights in *Sir Gowther*.[232] However, once Bredbeddle is suited in his green armour with this green horse, 'His countenance he became right well' (83)—which could indicate an alteration of skin. This would explain the porter's exclamation: 'In lifes dayes old or younge, |Such a sight I have not seene!' (101-02). It would seem strange for a knight in merely green apparel to elicit such a response. The text does not yield conclusive details of the

[229] *The Greene Knight,* in *Eleven Romances,* ed. by Hahn, pp. 309-35. All further references are to this edition by line number. A version of *The Greene Knight* is also provided in Brewer, *Sources and Analogues,* pp. 138-67. She also provides a synopsis of *Sir Gawain and the Carle of Carlisle* as well as a version of *The Turke and Gawain.*
[230] Speed, 'Folk Romance', in *Arthur of the English,* ed. by Barron, p. 200.
[231] Derek Brewer, 'The Colour Green', in *A Companion to the* Gawain-*Poet,* ed. by Brewer and Gibson, pp. 181-90.
[232] Diane Speed argues for this reading: 'He has a green horse and armour (80), but is not himself green' ('Folk Romance', in *Arthur of the English,* ed. by Barron, p. 200); as does Kittredge: 'This, by the way, seems to be the full extent of the "transposition" that he undergoes in our text' (*A Study of Sir Gawain,* p. 126).

marvellous appearance of Bredbeddle as Green Knight; this contrasts to *SGGK,* which explicitly states the Green Knight is green all over. Instead it emphasizes testing based on beheading and transformation through the magical arts of 'nigromancy'.

The Green Knight explicitly states his purpose of testing Arthur's court on his arrival: 'To prove poynts in thy palace | That longeth to manhood in everye case | Among thy lords deere' (118-20). Thomas Hahn names the three points as boldness, courtesy, and hardiness, and Kittredge as valor, courtesy, and truth.[233] While Arthur eagerly accepts this challenge, and suggests a joust or combat on foot, the Green Knight raises the stakes by suggesting a more deadly game. The Green Knight marks the test, not just as an exchange of blows, but explicitly as a beheading game. 'I shall lay my head downe', the Green Knight delineates, 'Strike itt of if he can' (139-140). This challenge of beheading differs from the challenge in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* which states testing, as in *The Turke*, as an exchange of blows.[234] The test lies in the return blow to be given to the knight in a year's time in the Green Chapel. As in *The Turke*, the text emphasizes the courtesy and valour of the court displayed in their response to the Green Knight's challenge: for 'Eche man wold this deed have done' (163). In fact, Gawain must play upon his relationship of kin with Arthur in order to win this challenge. Unlike the courts of Arthur in *The Turke*, the Arthurian court enacts rituals of hospitality, offering the Green Knight sustenance before the test. Despite its somewhat comic appearance, with critics such as Rogers even arguing that 'Bredbeddle's demeanour, politely waiting for the Porter to announce him, rather suggests that he has dropped in for afternoon tea', this group of

[233] *Eleven Romances,* ed. by Hahn, 330 n. 70; and Kittredge, *A Study of Sir Gawain,* p. 125.
[234] Victoria Weiss argues that in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* Gawain, striking off the Green Knight's head, rather than giving him a non-fatal blow, demonstrates deficiency in Gawain's character. See 'Gawain's First Failure: the Beheading Scene in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight', The Chaucer Review,* 10 (1976), 361-66.

romances all uphold courtly duties of hospitality.[235] Thus far, Arthur's court appears as the epitome of chivalric conduct and Gawain even eagerly performs the act of beheading.

The visceral effects of beheading directly correlate to the power of witchcraft: Gawain's blow cleaves the neck bone and 'blood burst out in everye vaine' (191). Yet despite this blow, the body does not die, nor does it transform. Instead, the body remains animate. The text describes the body in vivacious language—'wightilye' (vigorously), he 'sprent' (sprang) into the saddle (194); the head speaks 'lowd and shrill' (195); and all marvelled that 'he spake so merrilye' (200). The dismembered body picking up a severed head—and one that continues to speak to instruct—resonates with the images of cephalophores in hagiography; beheading was the most common death in hagiography and often was the only means to cease the saint's supernatural ability to evade death.[236] But even here the divine supernatural could continue to animate the saint's body, as in some cases, after being beheaded, saints were said to have picked up their head and walked to their preferred place of burial.[237] The most famous of these cephalophores is St Denis (Dionysius) of France, but examples also include St Paul the Apostle. Hagiography also details severed heads who could continue to speak such as St Cecilia,

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[235] Rogers, 'The Grene Knight', in *A Companion to the* Gawain-*Poet,* Brewer and Gibson, p. 367. Speed writes that the Green Knight 'is sufficiently ordinary to dismount and accept a meal before the game proceeds' ('Folk Romance', in *Arthur of the English,* ed. by Barron, p. 200).

[236] Henri Moretus Plantin, *Les Passions de Saint Lucien et Leurs Dérivés Céphalophoriques*, (Namur: Namur University Press, 1953), p. 53. See also Edmund College and J. C. Marler, '"Céphalologie": A Recurring Theme in Classical and Mediaeval Lore', *Traditio,* 37 (1981), 411-26; Kittredge notes a list of cephalophores: St Aed, St Buite, St Ciaran, St Cadoc, St Winifred, St Edmund, and St Paul (*A Study of Sir Gawain,* pp. 147-94). See also Scott Montgomery, 'Mittite capud meum… ad matrem meam ut osculetur eum: The Form and Meaning of the Reliquary Bust of Saint Justinian', *Gesta,* 36 (1997), 48-64; and Christopher Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), pp. 143-44. For more on beheading, see *Heads Will Roll: Decapitation in the Medieval and Early Modern Imagination*, ed. by Larissa Tracy and Jeff Massey (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Patricia Palmer, '"An headlesse Ladie" and "a horses loade of heads": Writing the Beheading', *Renaissance Quarterly,* 60 (2007), 25-57; Sheri Ann Strite, '*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight:* To Behead or Not to Behead—That *is* a Question', *Philological Quarterly,* 70 (1991), 1-12; Richard J. Moll, 'Frustrated Readers and Conventional Decapitation in "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight"', *The Modern Language Review,* 97 (2002), 793-802; Beatrice White, 'A Persistent Paradox', *Folklore,* 83 (1972), 122-31; Claude Luttrell, 'The Folk-Tale Element in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *Studies in Philology*, 77 (1980), 105-27.

[237] Other cephalophores include St Winifred, St Valerie of Limoges, St Aphrodisius, St Osith, St Proculus of Bologna, St Savinian, St Januarius, St Decuman, St Aude, St Sidwell, and St Noyale; Kittredge notes that 'a good many of these legends arose from images of saints holding their heads as a sign of the manner of their martyrdom', (*A Study of Sir Gawain,* pp. 176-77).

who, despite a botched beheading job which severed her windpipe but failed to sever her head from her torso, continued to preach the gospel for three days before dying.[238] *The Greene Knight*'s description of a body carrying its severed head still endowed with the faculty of speech, whatever its ultimate origin in Irish myth, would certainly have recalled hagiographic beheadings to a medieval audience. The beheading motif demonstrates the overlap between the sacred and secular, and how religious images could be repurposed in startling and transgressive ways—as the 'nigromantic' practices that could facilitate life in a headless body would certainly violate Christian precepts. This beheading also reinforces notions of testing in both hagiography and in *The Greene Knight*'s secular Irish origins, as beheading in both constitutes an ultimate test.

As the Green Knight leaves Arthur's hall, with a final flourish he re-attaches his head—a feat not performed in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.* This re-attachment of a severed head also has hagiographic precedents, such as Saint Edmund or Saint Winifred, which J. S. Ryan and Catherine Tkacz argue may have influenced the original redaction of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight.*[239] While the power that reattaches the head of St Winifred onto her shoulders is certainly divine, this is not the case for the Green Knight. The text explains: 'All this was done by enchantment |That the old witch had wrought' (212-13). This witchcraft has limited, proscribed means. Perhaps the nature of beheading links directly to the limited means of 'nigromancy' the Green Knight possesses: while in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* the Green Knight's supernatural power is ambiguous, fearful, and powerful, *The Greene Knight,* as Hahn argues, labours to explain the supernatural, which Cooper describes as deliberately lessening the Green Knight's

[238] A version of the life of St Cecilia appears in Chaucer's *Second Nun's Tale*, in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. by Larry D. Benson, 3rd edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 264-69.
[239] See 'Sir Gawain and St Winifred: Hagiography and Miracle in West Mercia', *Parergon,* 4 (1986), 49-64; and Catherine Tkacz, 'Ælfric and the Green Knight: Hagiographic Sources for the Three-Stroke Beheading Attempt', *Geardagum,* 13 (1992), 67-75.

potential power.[240] It undermines the potency of magic. Before Bredbeddle even arrives at Arthur's court, the romance unveils the type of power that allows a beheaded knight to survive: it is the art of 'transposition', learned from his mother-in-law whose speciality lies in making those living appear wounded or dead:

> Shee cold transpose knights and swaine
> Like as in battaile they were slaine,
> Wounded in lim and lightt.
> Shee taught her sonne the knight alsoe
> In transposed likenesse he shold goe. (52-56)

Bredbeddle acquires this art of transposition from his mother-in-law through careful learning. The text even contradicts itself, first giving Bredbeddle the means to transpose his appearance himself, but as he rides, headless, out of Arthur's court, the reattachment of his head is attributed to his mother-in-law. Both, then, are practitioners of magic and wield the ability to appear dead. This power of transposition appears in other medieval narratives, such as in Malory's *Morte Darthur* when Merlin transposes the Duke of Cornwall's likeness onto Uther. Yet appearing dead whilst actually alive also occurs in hagiographical accounts of Simon Magus, the powerful magician who opposes Peter and Paul.[241] Simon claims he, like Jesus, can return from the dead; Simon's brother beheads a ram onto which Simon transposes his own likeness, fooling Nero into believing the ram is indeed himself. The Green Knight's act of beheading and transposition is more powerfully realised than that of Simon Magus because the Green Knight's beheading is not a substitution. This powerful, visible display of witchcraft affects the court so much that 'Sore sicke fell Arthur the King' (214) and all mourned for Gawain (215). The court realizes that magic has engaged Gawain in a feat of testing that even Gawain's 'mightye manhood will not availe' (221). As in *The Turke*, his testing exceeds the human capacity of the knight and clearly brings to light the limitations of knightly prowess.

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[240] *Eleven Romances,* p. 310; and Cooper, *English Romance,* p. 142.
[241] Jacobus de Voragine, 'Saint Peter, Apostle', in *Golden Legend*, Vol. I, p. 342.

Bredbeddle tests Gawain's chivalric behaviour as the gentlemen 'plight their truthes to beleeve' (354) in the game of an exchange of winnings in Bredbeddle's castle. Kittredge remarks that this is not an exchange of winnings, but winnings shared between them.[242] Testing here depends on troth, namely that the precepts of the pledge are kept. Unlike *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the wife who tempts Gawain is no co-conspirator with her husband, but one genuinely desirous of becoming Gawain's paramour. Her mother, Agostes, who seeks to destabilise the familial relationship through her powers of witchcraft, orchestrates the wife's visits to Gawain. Bredbeddle opposes her actions, not as a practitioner of magic, nor because her illicit arts are unchristian, but because she seeks to usurp his male authority and make him a cuckold.[243] Agostes brings her daughter to Gawain's chamber ('Shee brought her to his bedd,' 371) and encourages Gawain into her daughter's embraces ('Take her boldly in thine armes,' 375) while emasculating her son-in-law ('There is noe man shall doe thee harme,' 376). In seeking to undermine her daughter's husband, she functions as a practitioner of magic who usurps authority. The tests of loyalty to one's host are in earnest as Bredbeddle's wife joins Gawain in his bed, declares her love for Gawain, and kisses him three times. Gawain refuses her advances through two arguments: not wishing to offend his host and, in the light of his 'deed to doe' (387). Gawain falters when he retains the lace—genuinely offered to Gawain by the lady who promises that, while he wears it, 'There shall noe man doe you deere' (400)—from Sir Bredbeddle in the exchange of the day's winnings. The text, ever explicit, highlights this fault immediately: 'That was all the villanye that ever was |Prooved by Sir Gawaine the gay' (427-28).

[242] Kittredge, *A Study of Sir Gawain,* p. 126.
[243] Kittredge argues that Agostes is simply a re-working of Morgan le Fay in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (*A Study of Sir Gawain,* p. 134). See also Heidi Breuer, *Crafting the Witch: Gendering Magic in Medieval and Early Modern England* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 85-87.

As Gawain rides toward the chapel, Bredbeddle shifts once more into the Green Knight: 'He transposed him in another array, |Before as it was greene' (442-23). Once again, the semantics of this shift are unclear. Hahn glosses 'array' as 'trappings' or clothing, which contrasts with the verb 'transposed' used previously in the text in relation to the practice of witchcraft. The altered appearance disguises Gawain's recognition of Bredbeddle—allowing Bredbeddle, in the final act of testing, to appear in the guise of the Green Knight and for testing to function along the lines of 'not what he seems'. It is precisely because Bredbeddle appears to Gawain as the Green Knight that Gawain retains the lace. Transformative disguise pushes testing to the limit and causes Gawain to stumble, whereas, had he known Bredbeddle's identity, he might not have failed.

Bredbeddle's reciprocal blow tests Gawain's resolve to adhere to the precepts of chivalry in the face of sure death. As he nicks Gawain's neck, he reprimands him: 'Thou shontest! Why dost thou soe?' (459). Gawain's merit is brought into question as he jumps up, calls the Green Knight a traitor, and clings desperately to the contract—a blow for a blow—which he has now fulfilled. Yet the physical test merely masks an interior one. While Gawain shouts, 'Noe falshood in me thou found!' (467), the Green Knight contrasts Gawain's reputation of renown, *gentillesse*, courtesy, and nobility—courtly values—with his moral failure in one of the three points he set out to test: 'thou wast not leele' says the Green Knight (477) through retaining the lace—in effect a failure of troth. In light of such failure, the three points of virtue do not deserve to be associated with Gawain: 'And now thre points be put from thee' (475). This failure, while recognized by Gawain, shows none of the deep remorse found in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*. The Green Knight has managed to uncover the flaw in Arthur's seemingly faultless court. Testing once again functions along the guise of 'not what they seem' and physical transformation complements a revelation of interior character.

The Green Knight's testing, however, has an ulterior motive—more than morally reproving Gawain. The Green Knight, aware of his wife's love for Gawain, relies on Gawain's reputation as the paragon of chivalry who 'wold doe me no villanye' (487) and deliberately engages Gawain in a feat of testing in order to have his wife's wayward affections quelled at their source. Gawain's amorous Continental reputation, and even his behaviour in *The Carle,* causes this extreme test to appear risky. Perhaps this implicit belief in Gawain's chivalric conduct attests to the extent to which the English audience idealised Gawain's character. The Green Knight employs testing not only to reveal a failing in Gawain's virtuous reputation but also to achieve his own domestic tranquillity. It oddly combines the elevated interior testing of Gawain with the Green Knight's own private affairs.

The Greene Knight differs from its source in the laboured explanation of all details—the lady's amorous advances in the bedroom scene, Bredbeddle's magic, and Gawain's failure are all named explicitly. As Cooper indicates, this removes all sense of mystery, so potent in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, and replaces it with explanation.[244] It tests through a figure who is not what he seems, reveals Gawain's interior merit—and failing—yet combines this with domestic incentives. Its representation of transformation—learned witchcraft in a severed head, active body, and ability to speak—recall the attributes of a cephalophore. While it draws on similar sources of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, the Irish legend does not feature reanimated beheading. This use of the hagiographic motif of testing-in-disguise is surprising in this romance as Bredbeddle employs his own transformation. He names himself a practitioner of magic, a creator of 'furleys' (wonders) (347). The text describes how he acquired his magic from his mother-in-law.

[244] Cooper, *English Romance*, p. 142.

The master of it is a venterous knight,
And workes by witchcraft day and night,
With many a great furley.
If he worke with never soe much frauce,
He is curteous as he sees cause. (345-49)

Behind the supernatural transformation is no sinister usurpation of power, but enchantment actively practiced by the protagonist. Transformation, in the romances discussed here, largely features as a usurpation of power, and those transformed as hapless victims. This transposition, while analogous to those in other Gawain romances, aligns itself to practices of male sorcerers—such as Simon Magus or Merlin. In these chapters 'nigromancy' is portrayed negatively with harmful consequences. While witchcraft is embodied in Agostes, Gawain's mother-in-law who seeks to destabilise the familial environment by leading her daughter into Gawain's bedchamber, the power of witchcraft is employed positively by Bredbeddle to rectify his domestic disputes and to elicit flaws within Arthur's court in the total adherence to chivalric ideals. Magic becomes incorporated into the home and ultimately is not named as diabolical or unchristian. The text carefully shies away from any mention of the word "nigromancy" but instead recasts learned magic into a potentially positive, instructive, and unifying action.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight

As shown, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* provides a narrative model from which many of the romances in this chapter derive and further functions as the source for *The Greene Knight.*[245] Like his later analogue, the Green Knight is someone who is not what he seems. To a more extreme extent than the other romances, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* juxtaposes Gawain's lofty reputation with his moral failure. Unlike *The Greene Knight*

[245] For critical debate on *SGGK,* see Ad Putter, *Introduction to the* Gawain-*Poet* (London: Longman, 1996); Putter, *Sir Gawain […] and French Arthurian Romance,* pp. 149-87; Elisabeth Brewer, *Sources and Analogues; A Companion to the* Gawai*n-Poet,* ed. by Brewer and Gibson; or the introduction to *The Poems of the Pearl Manuscript: Pearl, Cleanness, Patience, and Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* ed. by Malcolm Andrew and Ronald Waldron, 5th edn. (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 2007), pp. 1-41.

wherein magic is carefully explained, *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* presents magic and the supernatural operating in a more ambiguous and threatening manner. When he arrives in Arthur's court, his 'oueral enker-grene' (150) appearance combines with his fearsome size and intimidating yet courtly apparel.[246] Unlike Bredbeddle, whose green outfitting only evokes, at most, the sense of a marvel, in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* his green appearance 'creates a powerful sense of threat and complicity' so strong that upon his arrival the text carefully notes how Arthur's court can only stare.[247] He asserts his prowess and his disrespect in the first words he utters—'Wher is…þe gouernour of þis gyng?' (224-25). Despite the previous lines extolling the splendour of Arthur's court, the Green Knight cannot differentiate the king from his men. The silence that continues to greet the Green Knight's challenge hints toward the moral state of Arthur's court who keep silent due to fear (241), and all quake under the Green Knight's penetrating gaze. It appears, argues Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, that Arthur's court is in need of maturation.[248] Even when Arthur does finally answer the Green Knight's question, the Green Knight is far from impressed. He calls Arthur's knights beardless children, 'berdleȝ chylder' (280), and his proposed game of an exchange of blows is again met by such a silence that the Green Knight taunts the court—contrasting their alleged courtly and chivalric reputation with their present fear (309-10). This state of Arthur's court contrasts with later accounts, such as *The Greene Knight,* in which every knight would have eagerly accepted the exchange of blows. Arthur's court, like the Green Knight, is not what it appears to be. The discrepancy between reputation and action is so dire that Arthur himself must meet the Green Knight's challenge, and only at this, to save Arthur from humiliation, does Gawain

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[246] *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight,* ed. and trans. by W. R. J. Barron (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998). Hereafter all references follow this edition by line number.
[247] Burrow, *A Reading of Sir Gawain,* p. 103.
[248] Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, 'Decapitation and Coming of Age: Constructing Masculinity and the Monstrous', *Arthurian Yearbook* III (1993), 171-90. Lee Ramsey in *Chivalric Romances* notes Arthur's court as 'materially rich but morally weak' (p. 200).

neatly prise the task from Arthur. However, as Gawain lingers over the terms of the contract, and as he takes the axe to behead the Green Knight, the Green Knight engages Gawain, not merely in a test of prowess, but 'in a test of the most fundamental of all knightly virtues—"trawþe"'—further attested to by the 'frequent occurrence of the pregnant words "twawþe", "trwe", and "truly"'.[249]

The Green Knight quickly appears to be other than what he initially seems. Rather than simply appearing as a fearsome warrior potentially associated with the faery otherworld, his supernatural abilities include surviving sure death. As Gawain strikes off the Green Knight's head, it rolls on the floor, and blood spurts; the body fetches the head, leaps onto his horse, and the severed head speaks. Transformation here is not disenchantment but rather in defiance of the natural laws of death and life: the animation of a corpse that should be dead yet appears re-attached in the next encounter. Arthur's court, unlike in *The Greene Knight*, does not see his head re-attached, and the Green Knight departs with a sinister reminder for Gawain to meet him at the Green Chapel in a year's time. Once again this animated severed body, speaking whilst its body is severed from its head, recalls hagiographic images of the cephalophore. J. S. Ryan even argues that the *Gawain*-poet was familiar with the life of St Winifred, a cephalophore returned to life, and incorporated this into his poem.[250] This image of transformation envelops both secular and sacred ideologies. Both hagiography and romance portray episodes of animated, beheaded bodies. The power that animates these bodies differs—from divine power in one, to 'nigromancy' in the other. The motif stands as archetypal, and yet also mutable, such that it easily can be re-used to support two incompatible supernatural ideologies.

The rest of the narrative explores Gawain's outer reputation for chivalry with his interior moral character. This is expressed in the correlation between the Pentangle and

[249] Burrow, *A Reading of Sir Gawain,* p. 23.
[250] See Ryan, 'Sir Gawain and St Winifred', 49-64.

Gawain's character (640-45), the excitement of Bertilak's house to host the celebrated Sir Gawain (905-15), and the testing administered by Bertilak's wife, who consistently compares the man in bed with her to his lustrous reputation (1290-1300). Benson describes Gawain as too concerned for his courtesy during the tests in Bertilak's castle.[251] Bertilak severely tests Gawain through the exchange of winnings—drawing on Gawain's amorous Continental reputation. While Gawain navigates the test of the bedroom and the exchange of winnings (and the text even states this explicitly, 1549-52), he fails, not by accepting the lace, but in not relinquishing it to Bertilak.

Between the gift and its deliberate retention, Gawain attends his final mass during which he prepares for death through confession of sins and receiving the priest's absolution.[252] Gawain's religious attendance accords with orthodox practices of the time and further demonstrates the requirements of chivalric code to which he adheres. However, Gawain's sedentary behaviour contrasts with the hunting scenes the text graphically describes. In fact, Cohen even sees the beheading of the animals Bertilak hunts, the deer and the boar, as symbolic of the fate that awaits Gawain.[253] These hunting scenes are less defined in the later analogues and do not have such sinister implications.

As Gawain proceeds to the Green Chapel, he is further tempted by his guide, who urges him to flee and promises to carry Gawain's secret with him evermore (2108-25). Gawain's stalwart refusal contrasts with his fear as he finds himself alone—describing the chapel as the devil's lair and voicing his fears as he hears the ominous sound of an axe being sharpened—his death knell. The Green Knight pushes his test to the uttermost by making Gawain face his own death. The Green Knight elicits Gawain's character by toying with Gawain's reaction as the axe blade descends—reprimanding Gawain severely

[251] Benson, *Art and Tradition,* p. 46.
[252] On the validity of Gawain's confession, see John Burrow, 'The Two Confession Scenes in "Sir Gawain and the Green Knight"', *Modern Philology,* 57 (1959), 73-79.
[253] Cohen, 'Decapitation', pp. 185-86.

for flinching. After another feint, the Green Knight grazes Gawain's neck, which Gawain takes as the contract's fulfilment. Gawain's brazen hostility to the Green Knight contrasts with the Green Knight's gentle revelation of his moral failure through the retention of the girdle: 'I sende hir to asay þe, and sothly me þynk3te3 | On þe fautlest freke þat euer on fote 3ede' (2362-63). His fault, chiefly, 'Bot for 3e lufed your lyf; þe lasse I yow blame' (2368), is forgiven. The recasting of hagiographic motifs in a figure who has undergone transformation, who is not what he appears to be, and who has tested Sir Gawain and revealed his moral failing, all combine in the figure of Sir Bertilak.

The revelation of Gawain's character, unlike in the previous romances, causes severe consternation and anger. He throws away the girdle and curses his cowardice, which has led him to break his fidelity. He quickly confesses, 'Now am I fawty and falce' (2381), and requests the Green Knight to assign him some penance for atonement.[254] Yet this is not orthodox confession in a chapel with a priest. This is the Green Knight who works through 'nigromancy'. While the Green Knight responds that Gawain has already atoned for his sins through the three feinted blows given by the Green Knight, the fact that the Green Knight hears Gawain's confession and administer penance is nothing short of shocking.

Transformation, unlike in the later analogues, occurs through the 'nigromancy' of Morgan le Fay. She lies at the heart of the transformation and testing and figures as a person of evil intent ('For to haf greued Gaynour and gart hir to dy3e,' 2460), who is, disturbingly, incorporated as a member of Bertilak's household. (The astute reader is

[254] For the religious aspects of the poem, see Nicholas Watson, 'The *Gawain*-Poet as a Vernacular Theologian', and Richard Newhauser, 'Sources II: Scriptural and Devotional Sources', in *A Companion to the* Gawain-*Poet,* ed. by Brewer and Gibson, pp. 351-63 and pp. 257-75; T. A. McAlindon, 'Magic, Fate, and Providence in Medieval Narrative and *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*', *The Review of English Studies*, 16 (1965), 121-39; and V. J. Scattergood, '"Sir Gawain and the Green Knight" and the Sins of the Flesh', *Traditio,* 37 (1981), 347-71. However, one of the delights of *Sir Gawain* stems from the multiplicity of readings surrounding the Green Knight's nature and the power of the supernatural, and this Christian reading is certainly not the only interpretation. For a variety of readings, see Spearing, *The* Gawain-*Poet*, pp. 178-79, 219-231; *A Companion to the Gawain-Poet,* ed. by Brewer and Gibson; and Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural,* pp. 193-98.

intended to recall the description of two women, one old and one young, as Gawain enters Bertilak's castle.) Such a presence does not seem to trouble Bertilak, who requests Gawain 'to com to þyn aunt, [Morgan-le-fay] | Make myry in my hous' (2467-68). While the power of transformation here lies with Morgan and not Bertilak, Bertilak and Morgan are not enemies, but stand as allies. Magic integrated into the home is emphasised, as it is in *The Greene Knight*, for Bertilak is not disenchanted, but remains the Green Knight when he departs from Gawain. He explains the beheading scene through Morgan's ability to appear 'like a phantom' ('gostlych,' 2461). There is no more explanation given. Magic is enacted on nebulous, perhaps illicit grounds, and dually serves as both a destructive and constructive force. Through Morgan, the feminine portrayal of magic appears maleficent in its intent to harm Guinevere (2460); the masculine portrayal of magic, embodied in the Green Knight, reveals the immaturity of Arthur's court and unmasks true character behind courtly facades.

While the *Turke, Carle,* and *Greene Knight* all portray aspects of failure in Gawain, this is largely measured against overwhelming success: the positive defeat of 'nigromancy', restorations to rightful bodies, resolutely engaging in the exchange of blows, and returning, against all odds, alive. Yet *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* resolutely depicts Gawain's failure. It belabours the contrast between Gawain's reputation and his true character—and Gawain's surprise and distress when this moral calibre appears wanting. Benson notes the disparity between Gawain's idealised characterisation as 'knight of superhuman perfection' and his human failure.[255] The figure who is not what he seems tests Gawain; Bertilak's own transformation consists in his appearance as both Bertilak and the Green Knight, as well as in his ability to defy Gawain's death-stroke. Somatic

[255] Benson, *Art and Tradition,* p. 95.

transformation once again correlates to a revelation of interior character that is found wanting.

Conclusion

Figures of transformation employ testing to reveal flaws in the best knights, and all four display Gawain's imperfect character. In *The Carle*, Gawain's thoughts contradicted chivalric practices; in *The Turke*, Gawain violates rituals of hospitality and chivalric prowess in engaging with *aventure*; furthermore, Gawain cannot complete any of the three tasks set before him by the King of Man, and must invoke the aid of the Turke; in the Green Knight analogues, Gawain's retention of the lace demonstrates a lack of loyalty, a violation of 'troth', and a desire to preserve his own life. Each of these romances demonstrates that Gawain is perceived as the 'flower of chivalry' and yet, when assessed by a liminal, transformed figure, he falls short of that reputation. Rogers writes that this reputation was so pronounced that in these tales Gawain 'was himself condemned to stasis', a static character who appeared in 'formulaic roles where character development was irrelevant'.[256] Contrary to this, these romances employ testing in order to elicit awareness, at least in Gawain, if not the Arthurian court at large, of an imperfect embodiment of the chivalric code. The editors of *Gawain: A Casebook* even note that it is this failure which allows for Gawain's character development: 'In shedding the perfection that precluded character development and discouraged his adoption as central hero, he has sprung to prominence in some of the finest works of Arthurian literature'.[257] These four romances demonstrate that Gawain was indeed defined by the shedding of his perfection. While Gawain's reputation causes him to be held up as the foil of male chivalry, his failure in these romances suggests a character under development that differentiates these stories from the 'flat' characters of folklore.

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[256] Rogers, 'Folk Romance', in *Arthur of the English,* ed. by Barron, pp. 197-98.
[257] *Gawain: A Casebook,* p. 28

These, then, are romances of transformation: the initial transformations of the Turke and Carle function as an unwanted usurpation of power. Kittredge writes that in romances such as *The Turke and Gawain* or *The Carle of Carlisle* disenchantment occurs as a result of stringent obedience to the host's strange requests.[258] Yet on a closer reading, each of these romances also demonstrates a moral fault examined in Gawain. Other scholars such as Ramsey and Thompson note how the outside figure reveals flaws within Arthur's court. [259] In light of this failure, Kittredge's earlier theory that Gawain disenchants his host because of his navigation of good behaviour seems inadequate as the cause of disenchantment. These romances do not feature a transformation characteristic of folklore, wherein the hero must perfectly perform actions without help or interference from the person enchanted. Rather, in *The Turke* and *The Carle*, Gawain is coerced and threatened into performing the right actions that lead to disenchantment. Clinton Machann notes that Gawain 'is not the instigator of the action—instead, his function is to follow the instructions of his antagonist as carefully as possible'.[260] Gawain functions as an essential element in transformation, and his conduct facilitates disenchantment, but the repeated emphasis on Gawain's failure leaves the agency of transformation in these two tales ultimately with the enchanted.

Transformation in the Green Knight analogues does not function as disenchantment or as usurpation of power, but derives from active practitioners of 'nigromancy' and occurs within their very households. In *The Greene Knight*, Bredbeddle himself learns the arts from his mother-in-law, and both Agostes and Bredbeddle facilitate the art of transposition. Transposition ultimately occurs in the ability to appear dead while remaining alive. In *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*, Morgan le Fay orchestrates the transformations that appear in the narrative, yet this is carefully incorporated into Sir

[258] Kittredge, *A Study of Sir Gawain,* p. 103-04.
[259] Ramsey, p. 203-204; and Thompson, 'Muse on þi mirrour...', pp. 101-08.
[260] 'A Structural Study of the English Gawain Romances', *Neophilologus,* 66 (1982), 629-37 (p. 630).

Bertilak's home. Transformation again does not appear as a usurpation of power, nor does the Green Knight appear to function against his will as Morgan's lackey. Transformation appears to be more powerful in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* than it does in the later analogues as there is a more decided difference between the knight with the green skin and the sportsman Bertilak with his love of venery. They are one and the same person, yet the text makes no effort to describe the mechanics of this phenomenon other than being achieved through Morgan's arts.

All four romances feature transformation through beheading. On two occasions the beheading concludes an enchantment and precludes transformation to a new form. Twice beheading displays the power of 'nigromancy' in sustaining life despite a mortal blow. Beheading also functions to engage Gawain in a contract with his opponent in which Gawain is subjected to further rigorous testing. Beheading also, however, marks significant moments of transformation in hagiography. In hagiography, beheading, renowned for being the only sure means to kill a saint, marks the moment a saint is transformed from his or her earthly body to his or her heavenly one. This idea was particularly prominent in the later Middle Ages when the soul was believed to go immediately to its appointed destination rather than being consigned to a period of limbo until the return of the Lord on Judgement Day.[261] Beheading then inaugurated new spiritual life. This is visibly portrayed in the characters of Carle and Turke with the removal of the imposed body, imposed on them due to usurpation of power, and receiving back their old form. Kittredge writes: 'Thus a final beheading (which slays the enchanted body) may be necessary to enable the bespelled person to come to life in his proper form.'[262] While the Green Knight analogues ultimately draw on Irish legends of Curoi, the animated headless body resonates with the cephalophore. Scholars such Tkacz

[261] See Jacques Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory,* trans. by Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1981), pp. 263, 289-95.
[262] Kittredge, *A Study of Sir Gawain,* pp. 268-69.

and Ryan explore the connection of *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* with hagiographic beheading accounts, and demonstrate that while the majority of scholarship has focused on the Irish legends as beheading sources, the prominence of beheading in hagiography could also inform and illuminate the G*awain*-poet's representation of headlessness.[263] Beheaded transformation in these romances correlates to religious ideologies, and sometimes, as in *The Turke*, the works even emphasize this religious correlation. In many ways hagiography, with its wide dissemination and surplus of supernatural phenomena, provided romance with a database of supernatural motifs from which romance authors could draw and appropriate for ostensibly secular purposes. These examples of beheading point to the debt romance owes to hagiography for its depictions of supernatural transformation. Yet these appropriations are not only present in somatic transformations through beheading, but are also displayed in the construction of narratives of testing, the revelation of interior moral character, and the figure who tests in disguise and is not what he seems. Surprisingly, these romances draw upon hagiographic motifs in order to articulate secular transformations of 'nigromancy' that were condemned by the Church.

Even the figure of Gawain himself combines aspects of the sacred and the secular. In discussing Gawain's retention of the lace, Kittredge writes: 'Gawain is thus removed from the unnatural category of schematic perfection and brought within the reach of human understanding.'[264] Kittredge equates Gawain's reputation to an almost saintly status. 'The unnatural category of schematic perfection' could easily describe saints. Like a saint, Gawain is perceived to have a perfect character, and also like a saint, that character is tested. Yet unlike legendary saints, Gawain does not pass the tests. In *The Carl* and *The Turke*, Gawain's successful role in disenchantment surpasses the subtle lingering on his flaws; without successful disenchantment and with only the act of beheading in the Green

[263] Tkacz, pp. 67-75; and Ryan, pp. 49-64.
[264] Kittredge, *A Study of Sir Gawain,* p. 140.

Knight tales, Gawain's flaws become more visible to the audience. These romances draw on hagiography to depict the nature of testing, the perfection of the hero, and even the role of beheading, and while drawing on these religious ideas, employ them in surprising and unholy ways. Rather than emphasize saintly perfection, they elicit human mutability and bring Gawain, as Kittredge describes, 'within the reach of human understanding'—an understanding, familiarity, and likeness with the frailty of the human condition that is not possible to elicit in hagiography.

Hagiography, a genre primarily concerned with perfection and holiness, does not elicit sympathy, likeness, or verisimilitude between the audience and protagonist: the *vitae* portray testing in the extreme and the saint's holiness of character is able to respond in like measure. Their perfection is unattainable. The *exemplum* situates itself somewhere between romance and hagiography: such stories no longer dwell on perfection, but rather on the consequences of imperfection. These stories are stark in their black and white treatment of sinners and saints. Romance too enters into the discussion of perfection and testing. These romances describe a secular knight in tones of perfection similar to those used of saints in hagiography, yet these romances destabilise the secular icon of perfection and probe the territory between near-perfection and failure. Because romance does not need to include an orthodox Christian agenda, as described in hagiography or *exempla*, romance has freedom to explore the complexities of interior moral character, man's composite nature as both sinner and Christian, and the nuances of success and failure without the strictures impinged by orthodoxy. In fact, these romances are seldom orthodox. While Gawain attends a mass offered by a priest before departing to the Green Chapel, it is the Green Knight who hears his confession and grants him final absolution. The Carle builds a chantry to absolve the souls of those he himself has killed. *The Greene Knight* incorporates practitioners of magic into the home and eventually into Arthur's court, without any stigma attached to the contradiction with doctrinal practice. The Turke

describes the power of Mary as the means to his disenchantment, yet this Christian power is strangely limited from preventing his initial transformation and ties itself to human acts of beheading. Although these romances draw heavily on religious, often hagiographic imagery and motifs, their presentation of Christian precepts often does not align with Church practices, and often embodies practices that were condemned as illicit.

Critics have labelled these romances as full of a 'sense of English moralism', wishing to offer a moralising virtue.[265] Others have noted that this homiletic strain aligns with strong religious precepts.[266] Yet while romance obviously employed Christian ideologies, these ideologies are perversely used and appropriated to each romance's own interests. Ultimately, these romances are concerned with private moral conduct that is assessed by divine or supernatural standards. The concern with a lack of moral conduct in each of these romances indicates concern for moral character. These moments of unorthodoxy point to a private working of the divine in interior and private spaces of man: the Green Knight reveals Gawain's only failure in the isolation of the woods apart from the court; the Turke reveals Gawain's inadequacies in the face of the supernatural otherworld—so much so that Gawain, when offered the position of King of Man, refuses the title. The Carle assesses Gawain's thoughts, not his actions. All emphasize the protagonist's interior moral condition—an interiority assessable only by supernatural power. A figure who physically transforms reveals this interior moral status in Gawain. Exterior transformation then correlates to a revelation of interior character. Somatic bodies correspond to interior states.

Ideas of transformation progress from those displayed in the first chapter. Those transformed into animals revealed the identity—name and parentage—of a Fair

[265] Phillip C. Boardman, 'Middle English Arthurian Romance: The Repetition and Reputation of Gawain', in *Gawain: A Casebook*, ed. by Thompson and Busby, pp. 255-72. He notes Velma Richmond's analysis of an 'English regard for moral value' (p. 257).
[266] Mehl, p. 19.

Unknown. Physical transformation in one person correlates to a revelation of character in another. Somatic transformation from animals to humans proves more extreme, and less human, than those transformed in this chapter. In this chapter, those transformed appear in an extreme but recognizable variation in the human form as Carl, Turke, and Green Knight—decidedly more human that swan, werewolf, or serpent. The degree of interior character these more human transformations reveal is greater than their animal-to-human counterparts. The Carl, Turke, and Green Knights reveal Gawain's interior moral character, expose his shortcomings, and reveal flaws in the Arthurian court at large. The swan, the werewolf, and the serpent reveal parentage and name. Exposure of shortcomings proves a more intimate and private revelation of character than revealing one's social identity. There exists therefore an inversely parallel correlation. The stronger the degree of physical transformation (animal to human), the less is revealed about the knight's character. As the transforming figure moves closer to a human form, the correlating revelation of the individual's private interior deepens. These romances then embody both external and internal transformation spread across two bodies, and the transformed body of one individual corresponds to an enlightenment of moral character in the other. The transformative process reveals flaws in apparent chivalric perfection. The next chapter will consider the more extreme role transformed women play in the revelation, assessment, and testing of knightly character.

Chapter Three: 'Not What They Seem'

The Testing of Virtue Part II: Transformed Women

Introduction

The transformed men in the previous chapter demonstrate how hagiography provides narrative models for testing in romance through a figure whose appearance differs from his true nature and intends to test an individual's adherence to and implementation of virtuous principles. However, their remarkably transformed appearances, while resembling human form, forcefully signals supernatural power and these figures boldly state their intent to test Arthur's court. The knight therefore realises not only that he is being tested, but also that he is being tested by supernormal agents. This tests the knight's response to the extraordinary, and, as we have seen, often reveals flaws in the court's apparent perfection.

However, hagiography demonstrates how testing increases in difficulty when the transformed figure assumes human likeness and disguises his intent of testing. St Gregory does not know that the shipwrecked sailor is an angel; St Antony does not immediately realise the woman is a devil. Because the individuals do not realise that they are being tested by supernatural means, their behaviour tests ordinary execution of Christian principles. Romance too adopts this type of testing through an appearance of human likenesses—not in the form of transformed men—but of transformed women. The women in this chapter, the loathly ladies of *The Marriage of Sir Gawain* and *The Wedding of Dame Ragnell*, and the faery Melusine, employ this more complex model of hagiographic testing. In the previous chapter, the Green Knight or the Carl signal their otherness in their transformed form and use it as a means of coercion in testing. In contrast, the women in these romances appear as ugly hags or beautiful women, and although these appearances bely their true nature, their human appearance increases the difficulty of

testing because the knight does not know that he is being assessed beyond temporal means. The appearance of transformation increases the test's difficulty.

In fact transformed women in romance pose a more threatening test than transformed men. Prevalent medieval writings likened women to temptresses and devils. Theologians blamed Eve's temptation of Adam for the fall of mankind. Many writers extended Eve's temptress qualities toward all women. The third-century Church Father Tertullian writes of all women: 'And do you not know that you are (each) an Eve? […] You are the devil's gateway.'[267] Albertus Magnus, a thirteenth-century theologian, further supports this: 'It is affirmed that women are more mendacious and fragile, more diffident, more shameless, more deceptively eloquent, and in brief, a woman is nothing but a devil fashioned into human appearance.'[268] This notion of women as temptresses appears, as we have seen, in hagiography, where devils assume female form in order to lure saints into sin. Demonic women can appear as a succubus. In medieval thought, a succubus, a demon who assumed female form, could copulate with men; in turn, this demon could transform into the appearance of a man, an incubus, and impregnate women for the ultimate purpose to 'harm the nature of both aspects of man (the body and the soul), so that humans will in this way become more inclined to all faults.'[269] However, the woman did not necessarily have to be a demon in order to have maleficent intentions. Philostratus relates how one of Apollonius of Tyana's disciples encounters a lady who promises to satisfy his every appetite.[270] However, Apollonius reveals that this woman is in fact an

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[267] Tertullian, *On the Apparel of Women,* trans. by S. Thelwall in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: Translations of the Writings of the Fathers Down to* AD *325*, ed. by Alexander Roberts, 4 vols (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1986-1990), vol. I, I. 1.

[268] Albert the Great, *Questions Concerning Aristotle's On Animals*, trans. by IrvenM. Resnick and Kenneth F. Kitchell, The Fathers of the Church: Medieval Continuation (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2008), XV. 11. 2.

[269] *Malleus Maleficarum,* II, 21B-26D (24B). See also Elliot, *Fallen Bodies,* pp. 53-59; J. A. MacCulloch, *Medieval Faith and Fable* (London: Harrap, 1932), pp. 45-47; Kittredge, *Witchcraft,* pp. 115-23.

[270] See Philostratus, *The Life of Apollonius of Tyana; The Epistles of Apollonius; and The Treatise of Eusebius,* trans. by F. C. Conybeare, 2 vols (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, repr. 1989). Apollonius of Tyana, a first-century philosopher, differs from the medieval romance charachter, Apollonius of Tyre, though some

empousa or *lamia:* 'These female creatures fall in love, and they crave for sex, but most of all for human flesh, and they use sex to ensnare the men upon whom they wish to feed.'[271] Furthermore, the *Otia Imperialia* relates how the Lady of the Castle of l'Éparvier would leave church before the celebration of mass, and when detained by her husband, 'the lady was carried off by a diabolical spirit and flew away' (domina spiritu diabolico leuata auolat).[272] Women who turn out to be more than human certainly appear in romances such as *Sir Launfal, Partonope of Blois, Richard Coeur de Lion*, and *Melusine*. The Church considered unions with such women diabolical, and folklore accounts demonstrate the harmful consequences of intimate relations with such women.[273] Women, then, in medieval representations, particularly if encountered in isolation, were to be treated with caution as they could be something other than what their appearance suggested. The women in this chapter, the loathly ladies and the faery Melusine, play upon medieval representations of women as temptresses or as a frightening liminal force. Gawain maintains this ideology in *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle* when he agrees to marry a woman Arthur finds in the woods, 'thowghe she were a fend' of hell.[274] These encounters with liminal women increase the test's difficulty, as the knight must simultaneously maintain chivalric conduct toward the woman, while also apprehending the harmful personal consequences of such an association.

While the transformed men in the previous chapter uniformly expose flaws in alleged knightly perfection, transformed women elicit a variety of moral responses from the knights they test: a knight may be perfect, nearly perfect, or fail abysmally. Because

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connection may be made. See Elizabeth Archibald, *Apollonius of Tyre: Medieval and Renaissance Themes and Variations* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 1991), pp. 42-43.

[271] Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius,* IV. 25, quoted from Ogden, p. 106.

[272] *Otia Imperialia,* III. 57. 16-17.

[273] See MacCulloch, *Medieval Faith and Fable*, pp. 45-57.

[274] *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle,* in *Eleven Romances,* ed. by Hahn, pp. 41-80 (l. 344). This also appears in *Middle English Romances: Authoritative Texts, Sources and Background Criticism,* ed. by Stephen Shepherd (New York, London: W. W. Norton, 1995), pp. 243-67. Further references are to Hahn's edition by line number.

the female form increases the level of difficulty, testing in these romances pressures the knights to breaking point. As such, these women probe knightly morality to greater depths. Rather than expose flaws, these women expose significant spiritual failures. The motif of the disguised woman in romance is marked by great mutability, more so than the disguised men in the previous chapter and more so than disguised women of hagiography, functioning to expose and analyse a variety of moral states to a greater depth. Somatic transformation, in a more human guise, increases the revelation of moral character. The physical form of these transformed women lessens in extremity from the transformations of previous chapters. Previously, the physical form of one figure influences the revelation of interior character in another; this chapter furthers this argument by demonstrating that as the physical form lessens in extremity, the depth of moral revelation increases.

The Marriage of Sir Gawain

The motif of the loathly lady is surprisingly mutable in medieval English romance. As discussed previously, the loathly lady tales descend from Irish folk legends of sovereignty which employ testing in disguise in order to identify future rulers. Romance writers adapt these stories to feature a knight who must correctly answer what it is that women most desire, lest he forfeit his life. This answer is supplied by the loathly lady, who demands marriage to the knight, or his friend, in exchange for the answer. Once the knight marries and kisses his bride (i.e., performs the *fier baiser*), she is disenchanted, becoming a beautiful lady, and asks him whether she should take this beautiful form by day or by night. The knight then grants her sovereignty to choose which form she takes, which breaks the enchantment and allows her to resume her true form.[275] Romances that feature this story

[275] Eisner compares the use of the *fier baiser* in stories of animal transformation to loathly lady analogues. See Sigmund Eisner, *A Tale of Wonder: A Source Study for the Wife of Bath's Tale* (New York: Burt Franklin, 1969), pp. 121-34.

include Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale* (*ca.* 1389), Gower's *Tale of Florent* (1377-1381), *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle* (*ca.* 1450), and *The Marriage of Sir Gawain* (*ca.* 1400).[276] Both *The Wedding* and *The Marriage* employ transformation for purposes of testing. Chaucer places his focus, however, on correcting the knight, and thus, the subsequent chapter will consider *The Wife of Bath's Tale.* Both *The Wedding* and *The Marriage* reveal how the same motif shows surprising variation, and how the disguised human form corresponds to a deeper revelation of interior identity.

The Marriage of Sir Gawain (hereafter referred to as *The Marriage*) is a loathly lady story that dates to the fifteenth-century, and can be found in the Percy Folio. Like *The Turke*, it also has gaps in plot due to a damaged manuscript. The marriage features two figures of transformation, both of whom expose flaws in Arthur's court. The bellicose knight (who is actually the transformed Sir Gromer) highlights Arthur's lack of prowess when Arthur chooses to pay a ransom rather than fight him. The ransom Arthur must pay is to discover what women most desire—or forfeit his life. The appearance of the second transformed figure, the loathly lady, tests Arthur's court through their response to her extreme physical deformity. She appears from 'betwixt an oke and a greene hollen' (55) which signals to the audience her potentially supernatural state through other associations of faeries with trees (as in *Sir Orfeo*).[277] She appears human, although badly misshapen with one eye in her forehead and the other where her mouth should be, a crooked nose, and an awry mouth. The text only lingers for six lines on her abnormal appearance, yet this is so startling that the narrator summarises her state: 'A worse formed

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[276] For more on the loathly lady stories and their Celtic background, see Maynadier, *The Wife of Bath's Tale,* pp. 1-24*;* J. K. Bollard, 'Sovereignty and the Loathly Lady in English, Welsh and Irish', *Leeds Studies in English,* 17 (1986), 41-59; Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, 'On the Loathly Bride', *Speculum* 20 (1954), 391-404; *The English "Loathly Lady" Tales: Boundaries, Traditions, Motifs*, ed. by S. Elizabeth Passmore and Susan Carter (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2007). For more on the Celtic background, especially its intersection with the Christian tradition, see Knight, 'Celticity and Christianity', in *Christianity and Romance,* ed. by Field, Hardman, and Sweeney, pp. 26-44. For more on the Celtic background more generally, see Loomis, *Celtic Myth and Arthurian Romance.*

[277] *The Marriage of Sir Gawain,* in *Eleven Romances,* ed. by Hahn, pp. 359-71*;* and also in *Middle English Romances*, ed. by Shepherd, pp. 380-87. All further references are to Hahn's edition by line number.

lady than shee was, | Never man saw with his eye' (63-64). In fact, her description matches the early modern description of witches offered by Reginald Scott, who depicts them as 'old, lame', 'full of wrinkles', 'leane and deformed, shewing melancholie in their faces, to the horror of all that see them'.[278] According to descriptions of lone women in the works of Gervase of Tilbury and Walter Map, the lone female could be any number of things and could certainly be other than what she seemed. The inference is that she may be diabolic, a figure who practices sorcery, or worse, a demon, succubus, lamia, or faery—all which could harm the human soul. She even describes her own appearance as 'Most like a feeind of hell' (182). Therefore the knight's testing occurs in a potentially diabolical context. Her appearance gives rise to the possibility that she may be maleficent.

The lady's (transformed) abnormal appearance elicits flaws in Arthur's court. Her appearance is so arresting that when she greets Arthur, he forgets all of his manners: 'Arthur had forgott his lesson, | What he shold say againe' (67-68). The woman reprimands Arthur's behaviour: "'What knight art thou," the lady sayd,| "That will not speak to me?"' (69-70). She attributes his lack of manners to her ugly appearance. However, Arthur is not only guilty of a fault in decorum, but also of deep-rooted selfishness.[279] When the lady agrees to help Arthur in his search for the answer to what women most desire, Arthur offers Gawain as a reward to her in thanks for her service: 'Give thou ease me [...] [and] thou shalt have gentle Gawaine' (76-80). He does this without consulting Gawain in the matter, sacrificing his best knight out of his own self-interest. This narrative reveals the king to be both self-consumed and cowardly.

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[278] Reginald Scott, *Discoverie of Witchcraft: Being a Reprint of the First Edition Published in 1584*, ed. by Brinsley Nicholson (London: Elliot Stock, 1886), I. 3. 1-14.

[279] For how Gawain reprimands Arthur in *Gologros and Gawain* and *The Awntyrs*, see Gillian Rogers, '"Illuminat vith lawte, and with lufe lasit": Gawain Gives Arthur a Lesson in Magnanimity', in *Romance Reading on the Book: Essays on Medieval Narrative Presetned to Maldwyn Mills*, ed. by Jennifer Fellows and others (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1996), pp. 94-111.

Moreover, the lady's appearance demonstrates flaws, not only in Arthur, but also in the court at large particularly through the character of Kay. Upon seeing her, Kay makes two barbed remarks: first that he fears her kisses, alluding to the *fier baiser,* and then that he would rather die than marry her (142-43). This negative sentiment is shared throughout the court. Gawain's revelation that a member of the court must marry her causes a hasty exodus. Some go hunting ('Then some tooke up their hawkes in hast, And some tooke up their hounds' 144-45), while the remainder flatly swear 'they wold not marry hee | For citty nor for towne' (146-47). This is not the splendid court of *The Greene Knight* or *The Turke,* where each knight would readily accept the adventure God has sent, but a morally deficient court that fails in chivalric prowess, courtly decorum, and selflessness.

From what survives of the tale, it is clear that of the imperfect court, Gawain appears to behave the best. He reprimands Kay for his discourteous remarks to the lady. Moreover, he agrees to marry her despite Arthur's selfish promise, despite the lady's dubious, potentially demonic, origins, and despite the fact that this marriage requires Gawain to sacrifice his own body—a fear voiced by Kay in this romance (142-43) and by the truant knight in *The Wife of Bath's Tale*: 'Taak al my good and lat my body go'.[280] In spite of Gawain's apparent status as the best of Arthur's deficient court, Gawain is not free of fault. The manuscript is missing the lines describing Gawain's marriage and the loathly lady's initial transformation, but when it resumes, the lady has been transformed from her loathly state into a beautiful woman, and she offers Gawain the choice of having her fair by either night or day. Perhaps in a nod to Gawain's continental reputation, Gawain chooses, 'I had rather, if I might, | Have thee fowle in the day' in order that in the night, 'I with thee shold play' (159-62). This is clearly Gawain's answer, yet the lady

[280] *The Wife of Bath's Tale,* in *The Riverside Chaucer,* ed. by Benson, pp. 116-22 (l. 1061). All further references are to this edition by line number.

does not take this as his ultimate decision, and instead redirects him. She expresses displeasure at his response: 'What! When lords goe […] to the ale and wine? |Alas! Then I must hyde my selfe | I must not goe withinne' (163-66). Gawain has answered incorrectly, yet, unlike transformations of folklore, this does not register as a breach of the condition and thus ensure she remains in a state of transformation.[281] Instead, she offers him a second chance, at which Gawain alters his answer, even negating his first response by calling it a trick—'thats but a skill' (168). Instead he grants her sovereignty: 'Thou shalt have all thy will' (170). This correct answer has transformative effects allowing her to assume her true, beautiful form at all times. Gawain's second chance at the right answer allows a certain grace to enter the narrative, and places the agency, as in *Libeaus Desconus*, on the transformed female and not on the knight.

The lady reveals that her transformation into ugliness had been the result of witchcraft. As in *William of Palerne,* the practitioner is the stepmother—gained through what the romance describes as an old knight's foolish remarriage—who transforms both the lady and her brother. Her brother's form is 'carlish', linking his enchanted form with the romance's sister text in the Percy Folio, *The Carle of Carlisle.* While the manuscript breaks off when describing the brother's transformed state, the lady's transformation is depicted in devilish terms:

> 'Shee witched me, being a faire young lady,
> To the greene forrest to dwell,
> And there I must walke in womans liknesse,
> Most like a feeind of hell.' (179-82)

She is consigned to the wild and isolated regions, limiting her interaction with courtly society, and her appearance is made demonic. Her stepmother's transformation of her body represents stereotypes of liminal women as witches and demons, and decreases the

[281] Schofield, *Libeaus Desconus,* pp. 199-208.

likelihood of her step-daughter's interaction with others, and thereby her chances of becoming disenchanted.

As in the *The Turke* and *SGGK*, this transformed appearance is used to test the knight's chivalric response. The lady's beautiful and loathly forms are both used to test Arthur's court. Her ugly appearance reveals a lack of manners in Arthur, Kay, and the rest of the court, while her beautiful young body tests Gawain's magnanimity in the face of sexual pleasure. However, this failure, as in *The Turke* or *The Carle*, does not prevent her from becoming disenchanted. In the tales of John Mandeville, failure of the knight to perform the *fier baiser* on an enchanted dragon ensures that the dragon must remain in its transformed state.[282] These romances incorporate failure in moments where perfection is anticipated, and the agency of disenchantment lies with the person under enchantment, not the knight.

Like the enchanted male figures, this romance displays a character who tests Arthur's court through disguise, and her somatic transformation correlates to revealing and weighing the court's moral calibre. Somatic transformation in one character can result in revelation of moral character in another. Yet this develops the process discussed in the last chapter. The transformed figure appears in a more human likeness ('in womans liknesse') than the Carl, the Turke, or the Green Knight, and her supernatural abilities are negligible compared to the power of the transformed bodies of men in reading thoughts, appearing invisible, and surviving beheading. Despite the damage to the manuscript, the romance that remains prominently portrays the failure of Arthur's court. Perhaps this is due to the audience witnessing significant examples of Arthur's failure, which are merely mentioned in *The Carle* and *The Turke*, or thinly veiled in *SGGK*. This may be coupled with Kay's two jokes regarding the lady's kisses and his blatant refusal to marry her. The

[282] See Loomis, 'Fier Baiser', pp. 104-13.

sentiment of failure may be cemented by the image of the whole court upholding Kay's sentiment. The tale's sense of moral failure appears heightened in the few lines that remain. The lady's human likeness in her transformed state elicits a greater moral flaw, most significantly in Arthur himself, thus hinting at moral weakness permeating Arthur's court.

The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle

The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnelle (hereafter *The Wedding)* is an earlier adaptation of the loathly lady story, and, potentially, functions as a source for *The Marriage*.[283] While both the manuscripts of *The Marriage* and *The Wedding* are damaged, the manuscript of *The Wedding* is more complete, and perhaps due to the better condition of the latter, the remaining text of *The Wedding* portrays a more difficult case of testing than that featured in *The Marriage* through an emphasis on the hideous appearance of Dame Ragnelle and by increasing the breadth of Gawain's social humiliation. The romance also elevates the presentation of courtliness. Arthur's response to both Sir Gromer and to Dame Ragnelle differs remarkably from *The Marriage*. *The Wedding* opens with a courtly hunt in which Arthur becomes isolated and is captured by Sir Gromer Somer Joure for giving lands owned by Sir Gromer to Gawain. Arthur must play upon Gromer's sense of chivalry as well as his shame in attacking an unarmed knight in order to deflect Gromer's purpose in slaying the king. Instead, Gromer holds Arthur's life to ransom and gives him the challenge of uncovering what women most desire. Arthur's distress and sorrow appear

[283] *The Wedding* exists in one extant manuscript, Oxford, Bodleian Library MS Rawlinson C.86 and is composed in the Midlands dialect. The romance dates to the late fifteenth century: at the earliest, it could date to *ca.* 1450, but could date to as late as the early sixteenth century. See Purdie, *Anglicising Romance,* p. 239. For a discussion on source, see Thomas Garbáty, 'Rhyme, Romance', pp. 293-97. P. C. J. Field argues that this little romance was authored by Malory. See 'Malory and *The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell*', *Archiv für fas Studium der Neueren Sprachen Und Literaturen*, 219 (1982), 374-81; which is supported by Ralph Norris, in 'Sir Thomas Malory and "The Wedding of Sir Gawain and Dame Ragnell" Reconsidered', *Arthuriana*, 19. 2 (2009), 82-102; however Stephen Shepherd argues that it is not authored by Malory, but may make reference to him (and so was composed after 1470), in 'No Poet Has His Travesty Alone: *The Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell*' in *Romance Reading*, ed. by Fellows and others, pp. 112-28 (p. 126).

more gallant in *The Wedding* as he hides this encounter from the court and discloses his perilous situation to Gawain alone—and only when plied with questions by Gawain.[284] Furthermore, when Arthur encounters Ragnelle on this ride, she promises him the correct answer in return for the hand of Gawain in marriage. Arthur responds that he would rather die than offer Gawain in such a pledge: "'Alas!" he sayd; "Nowe woo is me |That I shold cause Gawen to wed the, | For he wol be lothe to saye naye'" (303-05).[285] Arthur is not only aware of the valour of his knight's character, but he fears even broaching the subject with Gawain because he is certain Gawain will comply. While Gromer displays Arthur's flaws, these only span two lines, and by contrast to his portrayal in to *The Marriage,* Arthur's character appears courteous, thoughtful, and long-suffering.

Gawain's character appears more munificent than in any romance featuring him thus far in this study. When Arthur relays his adventure to Gawain, Gawain's response reveals his magnanimity:

> "Ys this alle?" then sayd Gawen;
> "I shalle wed her and wed her agayn,
> Thowghe she were a fend;
> Thowghe she were as foulle as Belsabub,
> Her shalle I wed, by the Rood,
> Or elles were nott I your frende." (342-47)

Although this may be a figure of speech, Gawain demonstrates the depth of his love for Arthur in his willingness to sacrifice himself for the welfare of the king. Yet it simultaneously underscores contemporary ideologies regarding the nature of liminal women, and emphasises the peril in which Gawain places himself by agreeing to the lady's request.

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[284] Donnelly argues the romance pits the shallowness of courtly values against the depth of Arthur's own adherence to his word. See Donnelly, 'Aristocratic Veneer and the Substance of Verbal Bonds in "The Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell" and "Gamelyn"', *Studies in Philology,* 94 (1997), 321-43.

[285] All furthere references, as stated previously, are to Hahn's edition. This has also been edited by Laura Sumner. See *The Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell,* ed. by Laura Sumner (Northampton, MA: Smith College, 1924).

When Ragnelle supplies Arthur with the correct answer and Arthur escapes Sir Gromer's death sentence, the terms of Ragnelle's contracted service—marriage to Gawain—grow increasingly abhorrent. The text raises the degree to which Ragnelle tests Gawain—and the degree to which he must suffer—through not one but two descriptions of her physical form, far more hideous and hyperbolic than the six lines attributed to it in *The Marriage:*

> Her face was red, her nose snotyd withalle,
> Her mowithe wyde, her tethe yalowe overe alle,
> With bleryd eyen gretter then a balle.
> Her mowithe was nott to lak:
> Her tethe hyng overe her lyppes,
> Her chekys syde as wemens hippes.
> A lute she bare upon her bak;
> Her nek long and therto greatt;
> Her here cloteryd on an hepe;
> In the sholders she was a yard brode.
> Hangyng pappys to be an hors lode,
> And lyke a barelle she was made.
> And to reherse the fowlnesse of that Lady,
> Ther is no tung may telle, securly;
> Of lothynesse inowghe she had. (231-45)

Nearly every attribute of Ragnelle's transformed body appears grotesquely misshapen. This description, perhaps even more so than *The Marriage,* recalls Reginald Scott's description of witches. To labour this point, the text includes a second full-length description of Ragnelle's appearance that even features her with boar's tusks. The double emphasis on the lady's appearances elevates the horror, as mirrored in the reaction of the court, of Gawain's agreement to marry her, and increases his difficulty in adhering to his promise to Arthur.

To further humiliate him and to test the limits to his generosity, Ragnelle insists on publically displaying her hideous form. Ragnelle rides side by side with Arthur into Carlisle, and before any rites of hospitality can be observed, she forces Arthur to send for Gawain to publically contract their engagement 'Before alle thy chyvalry' (529). Gawain

graciously accepts her pledge, but instead of easing Gawain's plight, Ragnelle arranges for the wedding to be as public as possible. She sends proclamations to 'all the shyre, | Both in town and in borowe' (558-59) and summons bridesmaids 'of all lond' (560) to attend the wedding feast. Ragnelle is so intent that their wedding service be well attended, that when the Queen asks Ragnelle to conduct the service in the early hours of the morning 'as pryvaly as ye may' (571), Ragnelle insists they be wedded 'alle openly' (575) at the popular hour of High Mass and afterwards calls for a wedding feast, where 'in the open halle I wolle dyne, |In myddys of alle the rowte' (579-80). Each action pivots her toward public exposure, and the dissemination of her ugliness causes the entire court to despair that Gawain should be married to such a person. Colleen Donnelly writes:

> The poet concentrates his burlesque humor […] on the most superficial qualities of aristocratic behaviour to point at the shallowness of that very veneer […] and reveals that the ability to keep one's verbal oaths is the real substance of nobility.[286]

Gawain's adherence to his word is further tested by Ragnelle's lurid and exquisite choice of clothing, worth over a thousand marks, which contrasts grotesquely with her appearance: yet 'For alle her rayment, she bare the belle | Of fowlnesse' (595-96). Moreover Ragnelle causes Gawain, and the court, to reconsider the suitability of the marriage in an exhibition of her revolting manners. As the couple partake of their wedding meal on the high dais, she dissects her meat with three-inch long nails, appears to take an indecent enjoyment in her food, and refuses to delay her eating until others are served. Furthermore, she displays a monstrous appetite. She devours enough meat for six men, and eats everything put in front of her, 'Butt she ete itt up, lesse and more' (614), so much so, that she is still eating as the table cloths are removed and dinner cleared. The texts describes her manners as 'fulle foulle and nott curteys' (602), smacking of uncourtly decorum and gluttony. The description of Ragnelle borders on caricature in the

[286] Donnelly, p. 329.

hyperbolic description of her ugliness, her insistence on publically displaying her foul body arrayed in priceless clothing, and consumption of an indecent amount of food with indecent relish.[287] The entire court mourns for Gawain and treats his wedding as they would a funeral.

The manuscript unfortunately breaks off here, but when it resumes, Gawain and Ragnelle are in their wedding chamber, and Ragnelle further tries Gawain's chivalric character by demanding that he 'Shewe me your cortesy in bed' (630). She demands the *fier baiser*, to which Gawain responds with the same magnanimity he had demonstrated to Arthur: 'I wolle do more |Then for to kysse, and God before!' (638-39). This virtue, now tested to the utmost, suffices to initiate her transformation into a beautiful woman. The willingness to perform the *fier baiser*, rather than the act itself, proves transformative. Scholars have stipulated the conditions under which enchantment in these romances must be fulfilled, and Maynadier argues that it must be effected by contact.[288] However, the lady is transformed before Gawain kisses her in *The Wedding*, and a similar touch-less transformation occurs in *The Wife of Bath's Tale*. In *Libeaus Desconus* the dragon kisses the hero, not the other way around. Applying folkloric conditions of disenchantment to romances does not work: romance constantly bends folklore motifs to suit its own purposes.

The transformed body of the loathly lady, proven to be supernatural, causes Gawain to read her as the potentially maleficent, liminal woman. He asks 'What are ye?' (644). He wonders at the supernatural nature this creature may possess and engages with stereotypes of liminal women. She responds by reminding him that she is the same woman he married ('I am your wyf, securly' 645), and she offers him her foul form by

[287] For burlesque elements, see Stephen H. A. Shepherd, 'No Poet Has His Travesty Alone', in *Romance Reading*, ed. by Fellows and others, pp. 112-28.
[288] Maynadier argues for disenchantment by physical contact, while Kittredge argues disenchantment occurs through obedience, decapitation, or contact. See Maynadier, *The Wife of Bath's Tale,* p. 20; Kittredge, *A Study of Sir Gawain,* pp. 79, 82, 105, 268.

either night or day. While Gawain wrestles with this decision, he ultimately returns the choice to her. Yet, even here *The Wedding* increases Gawain's genteel behaviour. He hands to Ragnelle not only sovereignty over her own body, but sovereignty over his lands and estates as well ('Bothe body and goodes, hartt, and every dele, | Ys alle your oun, for to by and selle' 682-83). This fulfils the condition of sovereignty and breaks the enchantment.

Like the Turke and like the Carle, she is 'shapen by nygromancy' (691) wrought by her stepmother. However, the conditions of her enchantment are far more stringent than in *The Marriage*. Her transformation is ensured 'tylle the best of Englond |Had wedyd me verament' (695-96). He must also grant her sovereignty, not only over her human body, but also over his body, as well as his goods ('he shold geve me the sovereynté |Of alle his body and goodes, sycurly' 697-98). Testing increases in difficulty from *The Marriage*: the lady's body appears more hideous, the lady's manners more disgusting, her desire for a public wedding repellent. In this condition, she must wed the best knight, who not only grants her sovereignty over her own body, but over his body and worldly possessions. While Ragnelle's conditions of enchantment appear extreme, Gawain responds in a similarly extreme manner in his execution of perfect courtesy. Of all the knights portrayed thus far in this study, this is the first representation of Gawain to depict his courtesy perfectly. Ragnelle's tests, increased in degree, reveal Gawain to be an exemplar. Ragnelle even notes: 'God thank hym of his curtesye; |He savid me from chaunce and vilony' (778-79). Gawain's perfect courtesy proves transformative. Although the couple happily 'make joy out of mind' (706); although Gawain 'in alle his lyfe he lovyd none so welle' (806); although the couple beget Gyngolyn; the narrative ends with a final transformation: 'She lyvyd with Sir Gawen butt yerys five' (820), for Ragnelle dies.[289] This final physical

[289] Robert Shenk interprets her death seriously, but Shepherd describes it as a burlesque element. See Robert Shenk, 'The Liberation of the "Loathly Lady" of Medieval Romance', *Journal of the Rocky Mountain Medieval and Renaissance Association,* 2 (1981), 69-77; and Shepherd, 'No Poet has his Travesty Alone', in *Romance Reading*, ed. by Fellows and others, pp. 112-28.

transformation affects Gawain's interior state, for from this 'grevid Gawen alle his lyfe' (821). Somatic transformations continue to reveal and influence interior states.

The romance combines the sacred and the secular: 'She thankyd God and Mary mylde |She was recovered of that that she was defoylyd' (709-10); as in *The Turke,* the couple thank divine goodness for concluding the enchantment, yet this power does not circumvent the enchantment in the first place. Furthermore, Gawain agrees to wed Ragnelle despite her potentially maleficent nature. This romance also demonstrates how the same motif can be used for varying narrative purposes. *The Marriage* displays an errant Arthur, a faulty court and a better, though still imperfect, Gawain. *The Wedding* features a gallant Arthur, a sympathetic court, and perfect Gawain. The same motif of testing and disguise to reveal character is used. Finally the romance displays how somatic transformation reveals interior character. The more extreme physical form of Ragnelle in *The Wedding* tests Gawain to a greater degree, yet reveals no shortcomings faults within Gawain. The less extreme form of Ragnelle in *The Marriage* reveals deeper interior flaws. Of these two physical forms, the less extreme form yields a greater revelation of interior private flaws. Somatic transformations in one character reveals interior moral character in another; the more human the form, the greater the revelation of the individual's private sins.

Melusine

The transformed forms of the loathly ladies reveal the quality of a knight's character. However, the less physically extreme and more human form of the faery Melusine assesses—to the greatest depth thus far—the moral aptitude of a knight. Melusine similarly increases the difficulty of testing as she requires Raymond to adhere to an interdict, to not inquire where she goes on Saturday evenings, even though this causes Melusine to appear maleficent as she may be something other than what she seems.

Furthermore, Melusine requests Raymond to view her as a Christian despite her potentially evil associations. Raymond's test then lies in reading his wife's nature correctly—and reveals the eternal consequences of his success or failure in this endeavour. This moral success and failure directly influence Melusine's somatic form.

Jean d'Arras compiled *Melusine* (in French) in 1387, adapting it from a faery story recorded by Gervase of Tilbury in *Otia Imperialia.*[290] In 1401, La Coudrette redacted *Melusine* into (French) verse, and, it appears that La Coudrette's adaptation reached England earlier than that of Jean d'Arras.[291] The narrative version of La Coudrette does not adapt the chronological sequence of events of d'Arras's account, but orientates the narrative around the mystery of Melusine's nature. La Coudrette's account fulfils, in its representation of Melusine, every stereotype of a liminal, and potentially maleficent, woman within the narrative's opening. First the romance introduces Melusine as the faery paramour, like the lady in Marie de France's *Lanval*, through her proximity to water, her uncanny knowledge of Raymond's name and exploits, pregnant authorial remarks on her superhuman beauty (418), and Raymond's own uncertainty if this be a dream or not ('Where he slepte or wakyd wel knew he noght' 359).[292] Moreover, as in *Lanval*, Melusine offers Raymond fame and fortune if he will agree to marry her and to keep one condition:

> 'To god and his sayntes me swere now thys braid,
> That in mariage me wil be taking,

[290] For a translation of the French version by d'Arras into English, see Jean d'Arras, *Melusine; Or The Noble History of Lusignan*, trans. and ed. by Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012). For d'Arras's source, see *Otia Imperialia,* I. 15. 58-117.

[291] The EETS frontispieces indicate that La Coudrette's version appeared in English prior to 1500 while d'Arras's version was 'Englisht in 1500'. See Jean d'Arras, *Melusine*, ed. by A. K. Donald, EETS E.S. 68 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co., 1895); and *The Romans of Partenay, or of Lusignen: Otherwise Known as The Tale of Melusine: Translated from the French of La Coudrette (before* 1500 AD), ed. by Walter Skeat, EETS O.S. 22 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner & Co, repr. 1899). The English redaction of La Coudrette's version appears in verse and redacts the story in a more compelling and suspenseful narrative. For these reasons, and for the fact that fewer English scholars site the La Coudrette version, all references are to the La Coudrette version by line number.

[292] For the similar introduction, see Marie de France, 'Lanval', in *Lais*, ed. by Harf-Lancner and Warnke, pp. 135-67 (ll. 39-76); trans. and ed. by Glyn S. Burgess (London: Penguin, 2003), pp. 73-81. For the similarities to a faery story, see T. P. Cross, 'The Celtic Fée in Launfal', in *Anniversary Papers by Colleagues and Pupils of George Lymon Kittredge* (Boston and London: Ginn and Company Publishers, 1913), pp. 377-88; E. Sidney Hartland, 'The Romance of *Mélusine*', *Folklore*, 24 (1913), 187-200; and James Wade, *Fairies in Medieval Romance,* pp. 109-45.

And that neuer, dais of your leuing,
For no worde that man wyl vnto you say,
ye shall not enquere of me the saturday,

Ne after me cerche in no wise ye do,
Neither to what part drawith my body,
Ne what I will do, ne to what place go.
Als I schall you swere For trouth uerilie,
To non ille place go ne will certaynlie.' (486-95)

Raymond must 'not enquere' into Melusine's absence on Saturdays. Yet her absence provokes deep unease as this aligns Melusine with figures associated with baby snatchings, witch Sabbaths, or those who fear the sacraments.[293] A liminal woman of no known family or cultural assimilation and who also demands an interdict, prompts enquiry into her nature, as the Church's chief concern at the time was that these women were in fact not what they seemed, but maleficent in nature, and association with them could imperil the mortal soul. Indeed, MacCulloch writes that 'the church regarded [the faery mistress] as a demon: her lover endangered his immortal soul and risked the fires of Hell'.[294] Melusine's interdict then becomes a dangerous one: if she is in fact a faery, Raymond could risk his own salvation.

However, despite these hallmarks of Melusine's nature as liminal woman, Melusine pleads for Raymond to read her character as the very opposite. She begs:

But loke ye me truste And beleue verilie,
And dubte ye no-thing of goddys part am noght,
I noght beleue in hys vertues wrought;
Yut I you promise that I do beleue
Ryght As holy Catholike feith doth yeue. (458-62)

Melusine begs that Raymond 'beleue verilie' that she is Christian, which she proves by reciting the basic tenets of faith found in the Creed:

Euery Article beleue I and hold
Of the holy feith catholike named,

[293] The idea of the witch's Sabbath was thought to occur on Saturday evenings. See Kittredge, *Witchcraft*, pp. 239-75.
[294] MacCulloch, p. 45.

That god, vs to saue, of the virgin unfold
Was born without wemme in hir attamed;
Dethe endured; thir day rose unshamed;
After ascended vnto heuenys hie,
Ther verray man And varray god trulye;
And is in right syde of hys fader hie. (463-70)

By professing these Christian tenets, Melusine then counteracts the maleficent associations of her interdict. The interdict then rests on two notions: that Raymond must not see her on a Saturday, and despite these maleficent connotations, he must believe that she is a Christian. Melusine, in short, demands of her husband 'pryvetee', an aspect of sovereignty. Notions of 'pryvetee' are probed in *The Miller's Tale*, where we ar' told:

An housbounde shal nat been inquisityf
Of Goddes pryvetee, nor of his wyf.
So he may fynde Goddes foyson there,
Of the remenant nedeth nat enquere. (3163-66)

The Miller's Tale encourages the husband (and the audience) to 'nat enquere' and 'nat been inquisityf' into wifely secrets, nor the unfathomable depths of God.[295] Melusine's own demands, to 'not enquere' into her absence, but also to 'ye me truste' that she is in fact a Christian, draws on notions of wifely 'pryvetee', as well as aspects of divine 'pryvetee'. Melusine, as we shall see, incorporates both aspects of 'pryvetee' within her transformed body.

Even after Raymond agrees to 'beleue verilie' in Melusine's Christian nature, the text underscores Melusine's Christian nature in the description of their wedding. As she enters the chapel, she 'semed a thyng angell-lyke' (938); they attend evensong (993); twice the text refers to the couple attending mass (943, 953); and directly before Melusine and Raymond consummate their marriage, the Bishop blesses their union 'In nomine dei' (1011). Melusine counters her maleficent inference by partaking in the sacraments and

[295] The MED defines 'pryvetee' as 'secrets' and connotes both divine mysteries and female genitalia. See Frederick M. Biggs and Laura L. Howes, 'Theophany in the Miller's Tale', *Mediuem Ævum,* 65 (1996), 269-79.

associating herself with Christian rituals. The source for *Melusine*, the *Otia Imperialia*, gives advice regarding liminal women. Gervase encourages Augustus 'to favor people who are devoted to the divine sacraments' (circa eos qui circa diuina sacramenta deuoti sunt)[296] Gervase expounds in particular on the importance of the sacrament of the Eucharist: 'Christ himself comes down, judging you as you come before him the more severely as he sees the more deeply into your inmost being, trying the hearts and reins' (Christus ipse descendit, tanto districtius occurentem te sibi diiudicans quanto secretius te uidet intus, renes et corda perscrutans).[297] Gervase describes God's judgments as intimate, probed, weighted: the sacraments invite divine judgement upon one's being—which cannot be endured by maleficent figures. In other words, the sacraments invite God's assessment of one's 'pryvetee'. Therefore, it should not be overlooked that twice the text refers to the couple attending mass on their wedding. By attending mass, and further by participating in sacraments of marriage and attending church, Melusine has invited the judgement of God on her being. Therefore Melusine proves to Raymond that she cannot be demonic, despite her liminal appearance and her strange interdict.

Raymond's test lies in continuing to believe Melusine's Christian faith to be sincere despite further physical evidence to contradict this. First the couple give birth to ten abnormally shaped children. Many of these later succeed in chivalric prowess and contract prestigious marriages, yet their strange appearances have caused critics to read these physical aberrations as a 'mother mark'.[298] Moreover, Melusine's Saturday absences do not remain unnoticed, and at the earl's suggestion that Melusine is either a faery (2771) or making Raymond a cuckold (2769), Raymond cannot ignore such gossip. Raymond's

[296] *Otia Imperialia,* III. 57. 21-22.
[297] Ibid., III. 57. 8-11.
[298] See Douglas Kelly, 'The Domestication of the Marvelous in the Melusine Romances', in *Melusine of Lusignan: Founding Fiction in Late Medieval France,* ed. by Donald Maddox and Sara Sturm-Maddox (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), pp. 32-47; and Tania Colwell, 'Mélusine: Ideal Mother or Inimitable Monster?', in *Love, Marriage, and Family Ties in the Later Middle Ages*, ed. by Isabel Davis, Miriam Muller, and Sarah Rees–Jones, International Medieval Research, 11 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003), pp. 181–203.

passions overcome his rationality. The earl's words cause a visible change in Raymond. 'Raymound blusshed, changing his corage, | So malice And wroght, wiste noght what to say; | For wo And heuinesse full faste swatte he' (2779-81). This physical alteration indicates a being overcome by passion. His inability to produce speech for the excess of his emotions appears to denote a loss of rationality.[299] Raymond's passions overwhelm his reason, and in this passionate state, he deliberately bores a hole into the locked door of Melusine's chamber and sees, whilst she bathes, that her physical form has altered; from the waist down she possesses a serpent's body. 'Unto hir nauell shewing ther full white […] But a taill had beneth of serpent!' (2801-07). This revelation of Melusine's hybrid state, however, does not appear to trouble Raymond. He tells his brother, 'Sche is pure And clene Als without diffame' (2835) indicating that what Raymond fears most is cuckoldry.

In fact, Raymond appears far more distraught that he has broken Melusine's pledge, than in discovering his wife is half-serpent. Rather than blaming his own moral weakness, he blames the earl: 'ye haue made me do such A manere thing | Torn contrary will Again my person' (2387-88). In fact, he becomes so angry with the earl that he loses all reason ('semed all witlese to deuise' 2846), and threatens to kill the earl if he does not depart. Such unchecked anger marks Raymond as one ruled not by reason, but passion. The earl voices doubts that overcome the strength of Raymond's will to keep Melusine's interdict. Raymond's moral character has failed Melusine. His depth of distress causes him to earnestly repent breaking the interdict. His sorrow lasts over thirty lines, and the physical actions he performs ('with fist his brest smote' 2890) recall actions of penance. Although Melusine knows full well Raymond has broken the interdict, his behaviour influences her: 'yut knew she it wel, thow noght said of-new […] For he had uerray

[299] Patrick Boyde notes the medieval representation of passions on the body, such as the physical effects of anger, and his chapters on 'Anger', 'Desire', and 'Fear' explain the passions displayed in Geoffrey and Raymond. See *Perception and Passion in Dante's Comedy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

repentaunce' (2933). Because Raymond does not disclose to anyone her transformed state and because he repents so earnestly, Melusine allows Raymond to believe the interdict has not been broken. In effect she offers Raymond a second opportunity. It appears that because of this interior state of repentance, Melusine does not, as will happen later, transform fully into a dragon. Interior states correspond to somatic forms.

The revelation of Melusine's hybrid body indicates two key places where Jean d'Arras deviates from his original source. According to the *Otia Imperialia*, the faery transforms into a full serpent, not a half-human hybrid. Furthermore, as soon as the knight breaks the interdict and views his wife bathing, the faery immediately vanishes. However, Jean d'Arras deliberately alters this: Melusine is not a full serpent in d'Arras's account, but a hybrid; and although Raymond breaks the interdict, his passionate sorrow and his protection of Melusine's secret seem to nullify the interdict's strange rules as Melusine does not disappear. By not immediately vanishing, *Melusine* demonstrates once again what is common in romances: that although romances employ folkloric themes, they do not function according to folklore's strict requirement to fulfil conditions and, somehow, these enchantments incorporate failure. Raymond's repentance affords him grace. It appears that as long as Raymond upholds his belief in her Christian nature, and does not disclose her hybrid state, Melusine's strange interdict is not broken. Laurence de Looze supports this by describing Raymond's testing as an act of faith.[300] However this knowledge greatly increases the difficulty of testing for Raymond. It causes him to read the behaviour in their children as maleficent, and to doubt Melusine's second interdict: to 'beleue verilie' that she is Christian. Her hybrid body stands as a monstrous sign, 'monere', for him to interpret. John Block Friedman demonstrates that monsters were interpreted as divine signs from God, deriving from Latin 'monere' 'to warn', and the

[300]Laurence de Looze, "'La fourme de pié toute escripte": Melusine and the Entrance into History', in *Founding Fiction,* ed. by Maddox and Sturm-Maddox, pp. 125-37 (p. 129).

difficulty lay in determining what they did indeed signify.[301] The test for Raymond revolves around reading Melusine's 'signum', interpreting the marvellous sign of her hybrid transformation.

D'Arras's deliberate alternation of his source to present a hybrid, half-human and half-serpent, offers interesting contextual interpretations in light of other hybrids, who, in medieval and classical thought, demonstrate either hybrids of passion or hybrids of 'pryvetee'. Hybrids of passion are described by Ovid, creatures such as centaurs, satyrs, or fauns who are characterised by their violent and lustful nature: centaurs, drunk and full of lust, abduct the bride and female guests at the wedding feast of the Lapiths (*Met.* XII. 212-536); the centaur Nessus attempts to rape Hercules's wife (IX. 102-203); the satyr Pan hounds Syrinx in order to rape her; yet rather than fulfil this desire she transforms her body into a reed (I. 689-714). The minotaur, a product of lust and bestial passion, is characterised by blood lust and rage (VIII. 151-81). Hybrids in Dante mark the entrance to the seventh circle of the *Inferno*: the minotaur, centaurs, and harpies guard and aggravate those who committed sins of violence (XIV-XVII). Augustine interprets hybrids such as Silvani and Pan as passionate creatures who lust after and have intercourse with women.[302] Moreover, classical and medieval texts describe hybrids that resemble Melusine's form, but are ruled by aggression and appetite, rather than by reason. Classical texts describe the lamia, a beautiful woman from the torso up, but a snake from the waist-down, who tempts men through lust. Dio Chrysostom's *Orations* describe these creatures:

> They would reveal their chests and breasts and enchant men just by looking at them, inflicting on them a terrible longing for sex. […] But when the man had come close they would snatch him up […] bit them at once and […] devour the corpse'.[303]

[301] John Block Friedman, *The Monstrous Races in Medieval Art and Thought* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2000), pp. 109-31.
[302] *City of God*, XV. 23. 639.
[303] *Orations,* 12.1, *ca.* 100 AD, cited from Ogden, pp. 103-04.

This disguised female form further aligns Melusine's appearance with liminal women who seek to destroy men. Yet Melusine's nature does not accord with these snake hybrids. Melusine does not appear as a lustful or passionate person. She does not appear to harm people in her hybrid state. These are hybrids whose monstrous 'signum' denotes irrationality, whose passion overwhelms reason, and who use violent and lustful means to fulfil their untoward desires.

However not all hybrids are characterized by violence or lust. Chiron, another centaur described by Ovid, represents the rational embodiment of wisdom. Medieval representations even suggest the possibility that he might receive salvation.[304] Medieval and classical texts also portray hybrids as representations of the 'pryvetee' of God's salvation and, for those who encounter them, they stand as a *signum* to be interpreted. The *Otia Imperialia* records two accounts of these hybrids of 'pryvetee' in Jerome's *Life of Saint Paul the Hermit.* Antony, while searching for Paul, encounters two hybrids. The first hybrid points Antony in the right direction.

> He caught sight of a creature, half man and half horse, which poetic fancy has called a hippocentaur. […] The creature, gnashing out some kind of garbled speech, grinding rather than speaking its words between lips bristling with hairs, attempted a courteous reply, and indicated the required direction by stretching out its right hand. Thereupon it vanished from the sight of the wondering saint.
>
> Conspicatur hominem equo mixtum, cui opinio poetarum ippocentauri uocabulum indidit. […] At ille, barbarum nescio quid frendens, et frangens potius uerba quam loquens inter horrentia setis ora, blandum quesiuit alloquium, et dextre manus protensione cupitum indicat iter; ac sic per patentes campos uolucri transmissus fuga.[305]

[304] Ludo Jongen considers a medieval representation of Chiron as tutor and questions the possibility of the centaur's salvation in light of rationality and emotion, ultimately concluding his salvation is not possible. See 'Do Centaurs Have Souls? Centaurs as seen by the Middle Dutch Poet Jacob van Maerlant', in *Animals and the Symbolic in Mediaeval Art and Literature*, ed. by L. A. H. J. R. Houwen (Gronigen: Egbert Forsten, 1997), pp. 139-54.
[305] *Otia Imperialia*, I. 18. 10-27.

This liminal hippocentaur, although it cannot speak, communicates to Antony despite his 'gnashing outlandish utterance', and God uses him to point Antony to the habitation of the saint. This creature appears as a direct response to Antony's prayer; but although the hybrid functions for divine purposes, Antony cannot discern the enigmatic nature of the hippocentaur as either demonic or natural. Antony's second encounter, however, poses contentious theological problems:

> He saw a tiny little man with a hooked nose, his brow knobbly with horns, and his body terminating at the other end in goats' hooves. […] He received from him this reply: 'I am a mortal creature, one of the inhabitants of the desert whom the heathen, led astray by manifold errors, worship as fauns, satyrs, and incubi. I bear a message from my flock: we beg you to pray for us to your God and our God. We know that salvation once came into the world, and its sound has gone out to all the earth.'
>
> Homunculum uidet, adunccis naribus, fronte cornibus exasperata, cui extrema pars corporis in caprarum pedes desinebat. […] hoc ab eo responsum accepit: 'Mortalis ego sum, et unus ex accolis heremi quos uario errore delusa gentilitas faunos satirosque et incubus colit. Legatione fungor gregis mei: precamur ut communem Deum pro nobis depreceris. Salutem mundo olim aduenisse cognouimus, et in uniuersam terram sonus eius exiuit.'[306]

This hybrid, along with his whole tribe, longs for salvation. Their desires echoes the line from Psalm 19 which states that through creation, the Lord's 'sound has gone forth into all the earth'; John Block Friedman describes 'all the earth' as a literal interpretation to the medieval audience, which would have included the earth's edges, thought to be inhabited by monsters.[307] These hybrids profess faith ('entreat the favour of your Lord and ours') and he pleads with Antony to intercede on their behalf for the privilege of salvation. Antony focuses on the cause of their hybridity—a result of the worship of false idols—and before he finishes his diatribe and offers an answer to the hybrid, it flees. The text does not state categorically whether salvation for hybrids is possible, only poses a

[306] *Otia Imperialia*, I. 18. 28-50.
[307] See *The Monstrous Races*, pp. 1-2, 109-131.

complex theological question as to which creatures can and cannot receive salvation. Hybrids long for certain salvation.[308]

Hybrids longing for salvation are also depicted in Gerald of Wales's account of *The Werewolves of Ossory* (*ca.* 1185).[309] As recounted in the first chapter, a priest encounters a wolf, who brings him to the wolf's dying companion and asks him to administer the *viaticum*. To prove this wolf to be human, the he-wolf 'tore off the skin of the she-wolf, from the head down to the navel, folding it back. Thus she immediately presented the form of an old woman' (pellem totam a capite lupæ retrahens, usque ad umbilicum replicavit; et statim expressa forma vertulæ cujusdam apparuit).[310] As the skin is partially rolled back, the woman appears as a hybrid, with a woman's torso and lupine body. The priest chooses to administer the last rite, but this act leaves him far from certain he has made the right decision.[311] Once again these hybrids desire their ensured salvation.

Gerald was not alone in his unease regarding the spiritual status of hybrids. The Church Fathers were also uncertain of the salvation of hybrids and ultimately left such decisions to God's judgement. When Augustine considers hybrids, he identifies two markers of salvation: rationality and mortal being. He distinguishes rationality by human speech and mortal being as having human form, which he demonstrates through the Cynocephali.[312] The Cynocephali prove they are not human because they bark instead of communicating in human speech. Regarding hybrids, Augustine hesitates to offer conclusive statements regarding their salvation and opens himself up to the possibility of God's salvation extending to the extraordinary. Other theological scholars, however, were less generous. For Otto of Freising,

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[308] *Mythical and Fabulous Creatures* notes the desire for salvation in other hybrids: Hans Christian Anderson's Little Mermaid wins a soul and this is featured as a possibility for Baron de la Motte Fouqué's water-nymph, Undine (1811). See Ruther Berman, 'Mermaids', in *Mythical and Fabulous Creatures: a Source Book and Research Guide,* ed. by Malcolm South (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1987), pp. 133-45 (pp. 139-40)
[309] For a full reference, see Chapter One.
[310] *Topographia Hibernica,* ed. by Dimock, II. 19. 50-53; *The Topopgraphy of Ireland,* ed. by Forester, II. 19, p. 80.
[311] See Panxhi, 'Rewriting the Werewolf', pp. 21-40.
[312] *City of God*, XVI. 8. 22-3.

> All the others, creatures that lack reason, however nearly they approach to human form (as for example apes), or by whatever other forms the ancient enemy mocks the human race (as for instance fauns), and all other creatures of this sort have, as is well known, no part in this resurrection. [313]

While Otto interprets such possibilities negatively, his elements of assessment remain the same: rationality and humanity. Others such as Thomas of Cantimpré in *Liber de Natura Rerum,* Walter Map in *De Nugis Curialium,* and Vincent of Beauvais in *Speculum Naturale* and *Liber Monstororum* contributed to discussion of salvation for liminal, monstrous peoples. Rationality, as seen in the werewolf discussion, and humanity were key.

These aspects of rationality and humanity establish a basis for interpreting liminal hybrids. The first of Antony's hybrids lacks speech ('gnashing out some kind of garbled speech utterance'), which denotes a lack of rationality, and he is described as half-man and half-horse. However the second creature appears to have both rationality and humanity. The text describes him as a 'homunculum' or 'little man', and Antony marvels that he can understand the creature's speech.[314] By retaining both qualifiers of humanity, rationality and Adam's likeness, a hybrid may perhaps receive salvation. Salvation for hybrids remained undetermined among the Church Fathers, and while not impossible, the subject was to be treated with caution, and ultimately, left to God's judgement.

These ideas inform Melusine's ability to attain salvation. Melusine meets both of Augustine's qualifiers for humanity. Her speech is rational and clear. She possesses the 'seed of Adam' through her father, who is human. She is not marked by violence or lustful passion. If anything, lust and violence appear to mark Raymond, not Melusine. However, Melusine's situation is complex. She is the offspring of a faery mother and a human father.[315] Her mother Presine put a curse on Melusine so that she would become a serpent

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[313] Otto, Bishop of Freising, *The Two Cities: A Chronicle of Universal History to the Year 1146 AD,* trans. by Charles Christopher Mierow, ed. by Austin P. Evans and Charles Knapp (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), VIII. 12. 65-69.
[314] For 'hippocentaur', see *Otia Imperialia,* III. 87. 15; for 'homunculum', see III. 87. 24.
[315] For more on the hybridity of Melusine, see Kevin Brownlee, 'Melusine's Hybrid Body and the Poetics of Metamorphosis' in *Founding Fiction*, ed. by Maddox and Sturm-Maddox, pp. 76-99.

on Saturdays, a curse that could only be broken by a knight who would marry her and keep this interdict. Only then would Melusine die a mortal woman. Melusine's salvation is complicated by her mother's alteration of her human form. Although Melusine bears the seed of Adam through her father's blood, the loss of human form indicates a loss of the likeness of Adam. Her salvation, like that of Jerome's hybrids, relies on the intercession of others. Melusine's salvation appears to be contingent on whether Raymond does or does not keep Melusine's interdict. This loss of human form now makes salvation for Melusine a moot point. In fact, reading Melusine's hybrid body poses difficulty for scholars, variously interpreting her as demonic, faery, or Christian.[316] All this scholarly material elucidates the enigmatic nature of Melusine. Yet among these I find lacking a satisfactory explanation of Melusine's most consciously professed desire: as seen in the narrative's close, salvation for a liminal being. Melusine's salvation appears to be tied to Raymond's ability to keep her interdict and therefore it becomes imperative that Raymond 'beleue verilie' Melusine is Christian.

In order to reduce the difficulty of this test for Raymond, Melusine continues to align herself with Christian precepts. The text notes the baptism of her children. She and Raymond recite Psalms in thanks for God's blessing on them (1670). She builds a minster for Our Lady and founds many churches 'for the helth of hir soule deuine' (1680). She delights that Fromont chooses to be a monk—unlike his father who wishes he chose a higher office (2703). Moreover, when Raymond becomes distraught at their son Geoffrey's behaviour, Melusine articulates the depth of God's forgiveness (3515-35). Corinne Saunders highlights Melusine's pragmatism and virtue.[317] Melusine's actions

[316] For those who interpret Melusine as demonic, see R. J. Nolan, 'The Origin of the Romance of Melusine: A New Interpretation', *Fabula,* 15 (1974), 192-201; Stephen G. Nichols 'Melusine Between Myth and History: Profile of a Female Demon', in *Founding Fiction,* ed. by Maddox and Sturm-Maddox, pp. 137-64. For Melusine as a malefic faery, see Laurence Harf-Lancner, *Les Feés Au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Librairie Honoré Champion, 1984). For those who read Melusine as Christian, see de Looze 'Entrance into History', Brownlee, 'Melusine's Hybrid Body' ; and Sarah Sturm-Maddox, 'Crossed Destinies: Narrative Programs in the *Roman de Mélusine*', in *Founding Fictions,* ed. by Maddox and Sturm-Maddox, pp. 125-37, 96, 12-31.
[317] *Magic and the Supernatural*, pp. 188-92.

uphold the sacraments: baptism, mass, and marriage; her behaviour accords with Christian conduct and generosity. Tania Colwell even compares Melusine's to Marian standards of motherhood.[318] In effect, Melusine does all in her power to negate the powerful maleficent associations of her body inflicted by her mother through exemplary Christian behaviour.

However, Raymond's uncertainty about Melusine's nature is aroused by the 'mother-mark' left on their misshapen children, and this is further aggravated by Geoffrey's atrocious acts.[319] Geoffrey kills the Earl in response to Raymond's displeasure with him. Geoffrey also becomes irrationally angry with his brother Fromont for taking orders. Geoffrey sets fire to the entire abbey killing the abbot and a hundred monks (3289-3304). These actions are the result of his loss of rationality. When Geoffrey hears of his brother's acceptance of a low social status, he becomes mad:

> Off the dispite hys witte gon And loste,
> Vermail rede As blode, with tende hys goste;
> Off malice And wreth had in his body
> He uomed And swatte, A swine resembling. (3212-3215)

His red countenance is a physical manifestation of internal passion, while his loss of rationality likens him to a pig. At the abbey, Geoffrey succumbs 'in wode rage' (3291) and gnashes his teeth ('strayined his teeth apace' 3266). In this state of non-rationality, Geoffrey kills his brother and all the abbey's inhabitants. The text emphasises this loss of rationality, when after committing such deeds, he 'better remebred hys diffaute, lo!' (3317). While Raymond reads these actions as a result of Melusine's nature, Geoffrey's behaviour mirrors Raymond's own more than it does his wife's. Raymond's behaviours are kin to those of hybrids of passion. He, full of lust, chooses to marry Melusine (418, 420). In

[318] 'Mélusine: Ideal Mother', *Love, Marriage, and Family,* ed. by Davis, Muller, and Rees–Jones, pp. 181–203.
[319] For more on this 'mother-mark', see Kelly, 'The Domestication', *Founding Fiction,* ed. by Maddox and Sturm Maddox, pp. 32-47; and Colwell, 'Mélusine: Ideal Mother', *Love, Marriage, and Family,* ed. by Davis, Muller, and Rees–Jones, pp. 181-204.

'malice And wroght', he opens Melusine's chamber. His actions are driven by jealousy. When Raymond discovers that Melusine is innocent, he becomes angry with the Earl. Raymond again displays this same loss of rationality when he witnesses Geoffrey's destruction first-hand: 'So inly malic, full of wrath and yre, | In such cas brought, wiste not wat say ne done' (3446-47). Raymond's actions are consistently influenced by passion. Raymond's traits are evidenced in Geoffrey's behaviour. Moreover, Laurence de Looze suggests 'reading Geoffrey as a personification of Raymondin's own offenses'.[320] Being overcome by passion to the extent that it incurs a loss of rationality marks Raymond, as well as Geoffrey. Raymond, not Melusine, has left a paternal mark upon their child.

Sins of passion, which mark both Raymond and Geoffrey, Augustine likens to the behaviour of demons: 'For *perturbatio* (disturbance) is what the Greeks call *pathos,* and this is why he chose to call the demons *passiva* or subject to emotion, because the word *passio* (emotion) for the Greek word *pathos* means a mental agitation which is contrary to reason' (Perturbatio est enim quae Graece *πάθος* dicitur; unde illa voluit vocare animo passive, quia verbum de verbo *πάθος* passio diceretur motus animi contra rationem).[321] For Aristotle, this division between a passionate and rational soul is supremely human, a division of which medieval Christianity so approved that Dante's *Divine Comedy* is structured around the sins of passion and the sins of reason, the sins of incontinence and the sins of malice.[322] Dante's sins of incontinence—a lack of control, lust, greed, anger—are sins that mark Raymond. Stephen G. Nichols draws on classical and medieval philosophy of demons to argue, unpersuasively, that Melusine, and her mother Presine, are in fact maleficent. He provides little evidence that Melusine's nature is indeed

[320] de Looze, 'Entrance into History', in *Founding Fiction,* ed. by Maddox and Sturm-Maddox, pp. 132-33.
[321] *The City of God,* VIII. 17. 7-10.
[322] Hell in the *Divine Comedy* is divided between Upper and Lower Hell; outside the wall are the sins of incontinence (circles two through five)— those unable to control their passions or desires, and inside the wall reside perpetrators of sins of malice; this distinction is typically Aristotelian and Ciceronian in thought. See Lino Pertile, 'Introduction to *Inferno*', in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante*, ed. by Rachel Jacoff, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 67-90.

irrational.[323] However, this irrationality that Nichols claims describes Melusine, easily describes Raymond.

Raymond demonstrates that he, with his irrational mind, his major flaw, cannot cope with Geoffrey's behaviour other than by blaming his actions on Melusine's faery nature. He rails against fortune, becomes full of wrath, and blames Melusine: 'I trow thes children which that she bare | In this worle ne shall no maner good do' (3481-82). This contradicts the length the narrative dedicated to the valorous deeds and holy actions their children performed. In this state, he interprets Melusine as maleficent: he calls her 'Woman of the Fayry' and 'diffamed serpent' (3474-75). He views her as the Edenic serpent. Raymond finally makes his decision and chooses to save his own soul and denounce Melusine by her revealing secret, praying that God 'me ward and kepe fro werk diabolike | And stedfaste me hold in feith catholike!' (3490-91) Melusine, entering with the court, interprets Geoffrey's behaviour in terms of God's mercy and repentance (3522-40). However, despite her enunciation of Christian doctrine, Raymond cannot read Geoffrey's actions other than through Melusine. Raymond loses all rationality: 'reson deperted tho from hym apas' (3539); he spoke with 'litell thought' | his foley thought spitfully spake plain' (3545-46). He pronounces his loss of faith in Melusine's behaviour as Christian before the court: 'ha! Serpent! Thy line in lif no good shall doo!' (3547). By failing to continue to 'beleue verilie' in Melusine's Christian behaviour, by finally reading Melusine's enigmatic nature as maleficent, Raymond fails the test.

At the moment of this final failure, Melusine reveals her 'pryvetee': that this test had influenced her ability to receive salvation.

> Yf truly ye had the couenaunt hold,
> Vnto Mortall deth me to haue ye shold
> As A woman born here natural,

[323] While Nichols argues this rationality gives Raymond insight into her condition, this alleged insight is incompatible with Raymond's later pilgrimages of penance for Melusine's sake. See Nichols, 'Profile of a Female Demon', in *Founding Fiction,* ed. by Maddox and Sturm-Maddox, p. 148-49.

A feminine thyng, woman at al houres,
To end of my days here terrestriall. (3618-22)

If Raymond had kept her interdict, Melusine would have died a 'mortall deth'. She emphasises the form she nearly acquired: 'as a woman born', 'natural', femine thyng', 'terrestriall', 'woman at al houres'. By dying a natural, human death with a natural, human body, Melusine would have met both of Augustine's qualifiers of salvation: human body and rational mind. She even makes the connection between her physical body and her salvation clear to Raymond:

After the hy kyng, full off honoures,
Wold haue born Away the soule of me,
When that Fro body departed were she,
After beried in sacred sepulture. (3624-27)

Had she acquired human form, the 'hy kyng' himself would have 'born Away the soule of me'. However, this happy possibility, with Raymond's failure, is denied Melusine. Instead we are told:

But full moche pain shal I suffre Alway,
For pain shall I haue vnto the laste day,
That it like or pleasse our lord soueran
To come iuge And deme tho both quikke dede. (3598-3600).

Now instead she must wait for judgement day, for the inscrutable purposes of God (3598-3600). The terms of Melusine's interdict were salvation for a liminal being. Raymond's test, reading her nature as Christian despite demonic signs, proved immensely difficult. In choosing to save his own soul, Raymond damns Melusine. In fact, Douglass Kelly argues that Melusine was being saved—proven by the lessening of the mother mark on her children who had human form.[324] This reveals that Melusine ultimately is not

[324] 'The Domestication', in *Founding Fiction,* ed. by Maddox and Sturm-Maddox, pp. 32-47.

maleficent—neither demonic succubus nor child-snatching lamia—thereby inverting, as Jane Taylor and Rupert Pickens argue, carefully shaped narrative expectations.[325]

Raymond's failure becomes somatically written on Melusine's form. The romance clearly demonstrates the correlation between interior moral character and transformation. As a direct result of Raymond's failure to uphold her interdict, Melusine physically transforms into a full serpent:

> In-to A serpent changed tho was she,
> Of huge grettnesse and length was verily,
> Wherof all were Astoned strongly;
> With siluer and Asure ther burled was,
> Thys fairy woman such tail gan purchas,
> Which presently was become A serpent. (3867-72)

As a hybrid, Melusine could potentially receive salvation through her husband. With his failure, Melusine appears to lose both of Augustine's qualifiers of humanity. She loses her human form as she turns into a full dragon and she loses human speech. As she departs, the text notes 'A cry | full strange vnto hire, And right piteuous, | Hyr cry full heuy, wonder dolorous' (3876-78). Her interior state of being is written on her physical form. This romance correlates spiritual and somatic transformation across two beings, one informing the other. Heretofore liminal women had tested character to reveal flaws: here the flaws negatively affect somatically transformed states and thus undermine salvific possibilities.

The romance combines the sacred with secular. It explores the possibility of salvation for a hybrid and introduces the possibility of salvation through Raymond. Raymond displays great penitence concerning the consequences of his actions. He prays pardon because 'gret mischefe don gain hir hath he' (3793). While he cannot be pardoned, Raymond ultimately undertakes a pilgrimage for the salvation of Melusine and the health

[325] Something suggested by Jane Taylor in 'Melusine's Progeny: Patterns and Perplexities', and Rupert T. Pickens, 'The Poetics of Paradox', in *Founding Fiction,* ed. by Maddox and Sturm-Maddox, pp. 165-84 and pp. 48-75.

of his own soul. Melusine must now await God's judgement—his 'pryvetee'.Yet the romance ends on a note of hope. The nurses witness Melusine entering the nursery at night to suckle her children. Even in her damned state, she is given a certain respite from her new physical form to care for her children. This indicates that the dragon body may not be her final form. This romance, so rooted in the 'pryvetee' of Melusine, ends by calling on the 'pryvetee' of God, and, like Augustine, reminds the reader that the divine judgements of liminal figures are bound within God's own divine secrets, and he has yet to rule definitely against her.

Moreover, Melusine as hybrid-serpent and as transformed dragon functions in the same way as animal transformations discussed in the first chapter. Melusine herself founds the dynasty of Lusignan. Jean d'Arras composes the romance in order to record this family's noble history. Therefore Melusine confers identity on Raymond. While Raymond may not be a Fair Unknown, Melusine establishes his estate through the enchanted deer-hide; through the fecundity of her body, they produce many offspring; and from this large estate, Raymond wins renown. Melusine, in her hybrid and dragon bodies, reveals and confers identity on Raymond, and therefore functions as those enchanted into swans, werewolves, or serpents. Melusine too reveals identity.

Jean d'Arras deliberately altered his source in order to represent Melusine and to facilitate explorations of salvation for liminal hybrids. The texts which discuss hybrids who desire salvation are found in the very same work as the source for *Melusine*, the *Otia Imperialia*, and it is probably that d'Arras also read these hybrid accounts. His alteration of Melusine into a hybrid, not of lust, but a hybrid who represents God's 'pryvetee' regarding their salvation, encourages theological explorations similar to those described by Jerome. Physical transformation which is the most human in appearance offers the most difficult test: it plays upon the danger associated with liminal women, demons, succubi, and faery lovers, all of whom imperil their lover's souls. Furthermore, Melusine,

as the most human in appearance, reveals the greatest failure in moral character—that of deep rooted sins of incontinence. These sins are so great they pass onto Raymond's children, and Raymond is so blinded by his own sins that he names them as Melusine's rather than his own. Raymond's moral fault is so great that it physically and spiritually influences Melusine. By drawing on Augustine's qualifiers of salvation for a liminal being, salvation appears possible for Melusine in her liminal hybrid form, but it appears less possible for her in her final, bestial transformation. The romance of *Melusine* provides a space to probe these theological issues, repeatedly raised by scholars, without the need to conform completely to orthodoxy. Secular romance becomes a place to explore theological puzzles where the answers may not be straightforward.

Conclusion

The romances discussed in this chapter examine three examples of liminal women whose appearance differs from their true nature. These women display transformed bodies and appear as something other than what they are: the loathly ladies are enchanted damsels and Melusine, initially appearing in human form, turns out to be a cursed faery. These women, by appearing in human likenesses, increase the difficulty of the moral tests posed to knights because, unlike the monstrous transformed bodies of men, they do not signal supernatural associations. In this way, these romances employ hagiographic models of testing. Once again, these romances offer a strange representation of Christian doctrine. Gawain agrees to marry a fiend of hell. *Melusine* explores the liminal salvation for hybrid figures and Jean d'Arras even alters his source to facilitate these explorations. Moreover, each of these romances reflect cultural fears surrounding liminal women. The motif of liminal women is mutable. Their transformed bodies illuminate varying states of perfection and imperfection. *The Marriage* uses a transformed body to reveal moral failure within Arthur, Kay, the court, and Gawain. *The Wedding* uses a transformed body to test Gawain to the utmost, ultimately revealing his perfection despite the failure of others.

Melusine reveals unchecked sins of passion and incontinence, which uncontrolled by rationality, lead to perilous consequences. In these ways, physical transformation in one character reveals interior moral states in another.

This progresses beyond the patterns discussed in previous chapters. It manifests to a greater depth one's interior moral character. The first chapter revealed a Fair Unknown's identity. Monstrous males highlight a flaw in the veneer of chivalry in the face of supernatural testing. These women increase the difficulty of testing through their human, and potentially harmful, appearances. This displays a negative correlation. As these romances heighten revelation of moral character, the extremity of the transformed body lessens. As the physical form of transformation has evolved toward a human appearance and decreased in extremity, the revelation of interiority has increased. The function of these figures of transformation has evolved from revealing identity, to revealing flaws in alleged perfection, to a series of more difficult tests that reveal a deeper state of interior moral character.

At this point in the thesis, the romances discussed continue to display a connection between physical transformation and interior states. This chapter demonstrates the shift in the negative correlation between interior states and somatic forms. The romances previously discussed have emphasised the extremity of the somatic form. Romances treated from this point on decrease the extravagance of the transformed physical body (in the form of werewolves, giants, or hags) and focus on the transformation of a person's interior state. These spiritual transformations, like *Melusine,* are often depicted as written on the individual's body. However, as these romances shift toward spiritual, interior transformations, the revelation of interior faults intensifies. So far figures of transformation have revealed flaws in alleged chivalric perfection and tacit sins. The next chapter addresses characters who have already committed sins—who are already wanting in their state of moral perfection. In fact, their moral status proves so

sinful that divine agents of correction are sent to these individuals to persuade them to turn away from their sinful conduct. The next chapter demonstrates the need for an external agent of transformation to influence a revelation of interior, private self and how figures of transformation are necessary in order to influence and instigate moral correction in errant individuals.

Chapter Four: Liminal Agents of Correction

Introduction

Medieval English romances are deeply concerned with interior states. In fact, these interior moral states are so important that supernatural figures often appear in order to elicit the moral status of a knight. Magic and the supernatural—or figures who embody magically or supernaturally transformed states—manifest the nature of the protagonist's interior character. Thus far we have discussed how transformed figures have illuminated the interior quality of knights. Persons who disenchant from transformed animals revealed a knight's identity: his parentage, name, and inheritance. Transformed men and women revealed a knight's moral interior.[326] *The Wedding* portrayed Gawain whose interior moral qualities were magnanimous. Other works, such as *The Carl*, demonstrate his failures of merely thinking discourteous thoughts. Some romances display Gawain as wanting in all aspects of chivalric conduct. And others still portray a knight whose passion overrules his rationality. These interior moral states of knights vary—from morally exemplary, to morally deficient, to somewhere in between. Thus far transformed figures have merely illuminated these states of interiority; they have not interfered to alter or correct these interior states within the protagonist.

English romance writers, however, were not content merely to reveal the quality of moral character. Romance also displays moments of powerful, supernatural intervention in order to encourage, coerce, persuade, or even punish the romance hero or heroine into correct moral behaviour. This is visibly displayed in Chaucer's clever inversion of the loathly lady motif in his *Wife of Bath's Tale*. This loathly lady rather than

[326] Raymond Thompson argues that the figure of the 'outlandish stranger' enters Arthurian court to demonstrate its moral flaws. While this is certainly correct, this idea does not apply to Arthurian romance alone. This present section extends Thompson's argument: while liminal figures (Thompson's 'outlandish strangers') come to reveal moral flaws, they also take that one step further and come to offer correction. See 'Muse on þi mirrour...', pp. 201-208.

use her supernaturally transformed body (here, allegedly, via the power of faery) to test the knight's adherence to chivalric precepts, uses it as a means of coercion and punishment for a knight who commits rape. On pain of death, the knight must seek the answer to what 'wommen moost desiren?' (905), and the loathly lady will save the knight if he will agree to marry her.[327] Through marriage, the threat of sexual dominance is now reversed. As Corinne Saunders writes, 'The rape outside the court is replaced by the sexual domination of the hag over the knight within the court.'[328] The hag employs the threat of undesired sex, coupled with her *exemplum*-like sermon, in order to successfully effect correction of her husband. Her transformation brings this correction to a crux: would the knight prefer her ugly and loyal or beautiful and unfaithful? The knight evidences his corrected interior when he grants his wife, not himself, mastery over her form. She removes the means by which she fostered correction, her loathly form, as she is transformed into a beautiful lady. She possesses an inherent, supernatural ability to transform herself at will that is not conditional on the knight's performance or his accomplishment of the *fier baiser*.[329] Two types of transformation have occurred: physical exterior transformation of one body correlates to an interior shift within another, and somatically transformed states influence interior transformations.

The following chapter demonstrates the interest of Middle English romance in correcting faulty interior states. The correction of these individuals is encouraged through figures of supernatural transformation. The faults corrected include Guinevere's alleged infidelity in *Awntyrs off Arthur,* Sir Amadace's spendthrift habits, and Robert of Cisyle's

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[327] Chaucer composed *The Wife of Bath's Tale* between 1392-1395. For more on the *Wife of Bath's Tale,* see Helen Cooper, *Oxford Guides to Chaucer: The Canterbury Tales,* 2nd end (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 139-66; and P. J. C. Field, 'What Women Really Want: The Genesis of Chaucer's *Wife of Bath's Tale*', *Arthurian Literature,* 27 (2010), pp. 59-85. For source material, see introduction to Chapter Three. For studies on Chaucer more generally, see *Writers and their Background: Geoffrey Chaucer,* ed. by Derek Brewer (London: G. Bell and sons, 1974); *A Concise Companion to Chaucer,* ed. by Corinne Saunders (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006); and Priscilla Martin, *Chaucer's Women: Nuns, Wives, and Amazons* (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, Ltd, reprt. 1996), pp. 52-65.

[328] *Rape and Ravishment in the Literature of Medieval England* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2001), p. 305.

[329] Saunders, *Magic and the Supernatural*, p. 193

pernicious pride. These individuals appear errant; their faults, unlike the previous examples, do not have to be revealed. The correction of these individuals is encouraged through figures who are supernaturally transformed. These liminal agents appear in order to foster correction. However, these agents of correction only encourage the individual toward correct behaviour. They either offer a mirror of the consequences the individual will one day reap, influence his fame or fortune, or employ a combination of both. These agents do not apply transformative correction to the bodies of the errant individuals themselves. These liminal agents enact correction through their own transformed bodies.

Somatic transformation takes a human form. These transformed individuals appear as revenants, the returned dead, decomposing bodies, and angels who assume the individual's likeness. These liminal agents—Guinevere's mother, the White Knight, and Robert's angel—have all been sent by divine power. The angel in *Robert of Cisyle* usurps Robert's likeness and parallels instances of demonic transformation, yet still demonstrates concern with the human form. The human bodies returned in *Awntyrs* and *Amadace* manifest somatic transformations effected by death and the consequences spiritual status has on the somatic, or (to borrow a term from Bynum) psycho-somatic form.[330] In these ways, somatic transformation has shifted from animals, to extreme displays of human form, to natural human transformations—such as occurs in death. Moreover, these transformations also display a shift in power. Previous transformations occurred through the work of illicit magic, often wrought by another individual, to usurp the human form. In these works, transformations occur through supernatural power—be that miracle or marvel, the power of faery or divine Providence. These supernaturally-inspired physical forms relate to interior states within another individual, and in fact suggest that only

[330] 'Psychosomatic' refers to Bynum's description of the body as the soul's expression or manifestation. See Bynum, *Fragmentation and Redemption,* pp. 227-29.

supernatural power can truly effect interior change. Corporeal forms then inspire interior transformation.

Religious principles have permeated romances, which feature secular displays of transformation. *William of Palerne* writes a werewolf as a Christ-figure; *Chevalere Assigne* describes the transformed state through sacrificial symbolism; the description of the Lady of Sinadoun's transformation echoes accounts of creation and miracle. Romances of testing employ the hagiographic motif of a transformed person who is not what he or she appears to be in order to reveal interior character and flaws. Romances of female transformation play on stereotypes of liminal women thought to be demonic or maleficent. Some of these, such as *Melusine*, demonstrate the spiritual fears surrounding a transformed body. All of these romances, albeit secular in tenor, engage with religious ideology to articulate transformed states in one way or another. However, Middle English romances are not all secular in tone, and in fact many addressed religious tenets directly. These religious romances are a particularly English phenomenon. More than their continental cousins, English romance appropriated religious ideologies and motifs into its chivalric universe. Many of these romances have been labelled hagiographic romances and speak to the considerable overlap between the two genres. These romances with a religious emphasis are treated in this chapter. They directly engage religious ideas. All three draw from *exempla* sources. *Awntyrs* warns Guinevere against adultery; the sins of Guinevere's mother are written on her revenant body. *Amadace* considers temporal and divine generosity and the correct perception of each. *Robert of Cisyle* challenges the sin of pride by influencing Robert's fame and fortune. In light of this religious engagement, the romances seek spiritual correction of the errant individual. These three romances employ religious ideology in order to articulate the nature of moral failure and corresponding corrective measures, and, at times, employs (with variation) motifs from hagiography, *exempla,* or devotional literature, in extreme ways, in order to convey corrective warnings.

Because these romances are dominated by religious principles, the transformations which these agents of correction effect within the errant individual are spiritual transformations.

Awntyrs off Arthur

The *Awntyrs off Arthur* (hereafter *Awntyrs)* explores somatic transformation through the revenant body of Guinevere's (Gaynor in the text) mother. Whilst the court is out hunting, the weather drastically changes causing Guinevere and Gawain to seek shelter by the Tarn Wadling.[331] Out of the Tarn issues the grotesque form of a decaying corpse:

> Bare was the body and blak to the bone,
> Al biclagged in clay, uncomly cladde.
> Hit waried, hit wayment as a woman,
> But on hide ne on huwe no heling hit hadde.[332] (105-06)

The blackness of the body covered in earth suggests a decomposing buried corpse.[333] Moreover toads hang from her jowls, her eyes burn red as glowing embers, and serpents, too many to count, encircle her body (120-21). As it draws closer, it 'Yauland and yomerand with many loude yelles' (86). Guinevere persuades Gawain to speak with the figure, and the figure reveals that she is returned from the dead and suffers now for sins

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[331] For this hunting party fostering expectations of encounter, see Virginia Lowe, 'Folklore as a Unifying Factor in "The Awntyrs Off Arthure"', *Folklore Forum,* 13 (1980), pp. 199-223.

[332] *Awntyrs off Arthure* dates to the early fifteenth century, is composed in a Northern dialect, and is extant in four manuscripts. The texts have been edited by scholars such as Robert Gates, *The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne: A Critical Edition,* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1969); Ralph Hanna III, *The Awntyrs off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyn,* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1974); and Stephen Shepherd in *Middle English Romances,* pp. 219-43. However, all proceeding references are to *Eleven Romances,* ed. by Hahn, pp. 169-226, to line number. Much criticism is concerned with *Awntyrs'* structure as a unified romance. Those in favor of unity include: A. C. Spearing, 'Central and Displaced Sovereignty in Three Medieval Poems'*, The Review of English Studies,* 33 (1982), 247-61; Helen Philips, '*The Awntyrs Off Arthure:* Structure and Meaning. A Reassessment', *Arthurian Literature,* 12 (1993), 63-89; Krista Sue-Twu, '*The Awntyrs Off Arthure at the Terne Wathelyne:* Reliquary for Romance', *Arthurian Literature,* 20 (2003), 103-22. Those who argue that it is combination of two separate poems include: Ralph Hanna III, '*The Awntyrs Off Arthure:* An Interpretation', *Modern Language Quarterly* 31 (1970), 275-97; J. O. Fichte, '*The Awntyrs Off Arthure:* An Unconscious Change of the Paradigm of Adventure', in *The Living Middle Ages: Studies in Mediaeval English Literature and Its Tradition: A Festschrift for Karl Heinz Göller,* ed. by Uew Böker, Manfred Markus, and Rainer Schöwerling (Stuttgart: Belser, 1989), pp. 129-36; and Stephen Shepherd, '"Heathenic" Catechesis and the Source of *Awntyrs B'*, *Medium Ævum,* 81 (2012), 1-17.

[333] Margaret Robson offers a physical explanation for the appearance of the ghost's body ghost in terms of decomposition. See 'From Beyond the Grave: Darkness at Noon in *The Awntyrs off Arthur',* in *The Spirit of […] Romance*, ed. by Putter and Gilbert, pp. 219-36 (pp. 226-28).

she committed in her life. Moreover, this suffering figure reveals that she is Guinevere's mother.

This description of the ghost's decaying body and returned state draws on culturally prevalent ideas of revenants and ghosts. The early Church, as demonstrated by Augustine's writings, saw the return of the dead as an impossibility and attributed eye-witness accounts to demonic visions.[334] However, the rise of hagiography, with saints appearing in dreams and visions, altered the Church's perception of the dead.[335] Caciola terms these incorporeal visitors 'wraiths' and demonstrates how these differ from testimonies that described the bodily return of the dead or 'revenant'. French for 'the returned', revenants marked the corporeal presence of the dead distinguished by several features: they possessed a physical body, linked to an intact corpse; they concealed a person's own spirit (not a demon); they signalled the manner of the individual's life and death, often marked by unrest or evil; and they have the ability to physically harm the living.[336] The vivacity, physicality, and human nature of Guinevere's mother all point to Caciola's signifiers of revenant. However, Caciola argues the revenant requires an intact corpse and the body of Guinevere's mother clearly has decayed. The decomposing body of Guinevere's mother engages more with what Kenneth Rooney describes as the foundational macabre idiom: 'imagining the dead in precisely formulated and remorselessly physical configuration as horrifyingly decomposed.'[337] The macabre description vividly portrays the transformative influence of death on natural bodies.

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[334] Augustine's argument is analyzed by both Jean-Claude Schmitt, in *Ghosts in the Middle Ages: The Living and the Dead in Medieval Society*, trans. by Teresa Lavender Fagan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 17-27; and by Nancy Caciola, in 'Wraiths, Revenants and Ritual in Medieval Culture', *Past and Present*, 152 (1996), p. 13. On the returned dead, see also Aline G. Hornaday, 'Visitors from Another Space: The Medieval Revenant as Foreigner', in *Meeting the Foreign in the Middle Ages*, ed. by Albrecht Classen (Routledge: New York, 2002), pp. 71-95.

[335] In fact, the Church contributed to the rise of ghost stories. For many years stories of saints were indistinguishable from stories of ghosts. See Schmitt, *Ghosts,* p. 29.

[336] Caciola, 'Wraiths', p. 26.

[337] Kenneth Rooney, *Mortality and Imagination: The Life of the Dead in Medieval English Literature* (Turnhout: Brepols, 2011), p. 6. Schmitt also notes ghosts returned as macabre, p. 206.

Guinevere's mother even notes the transformative nature of death: 'How delfulle deth has me dight!' (154).[338] Here *Awntyrs* combines attributes of the corporeal revenant with the macabre idiom in order to emphasize the somatic transformative nature of death; the startling re-appearance of a decaying corpse forces the viewer to consider the effects of such a transformation.

Guinevere's mother suffers for sins she committed in her life and failed to repent: 'I brak a solempne avowe […] That is luf paramour, listes and delites|That has me light and laft logh in a lake' (205, 214-15). Because she did not repent of these sins before she died, she now suffers the pains of purgatory. These sins, carefully alluded to in *Awntyrs*, find explicit mention in their direct source. Klausner notes a motif in *exempla* of an adulterous wife who conceives, gives birth, and then kills her bastard children; the mother appears holy, never confesses, and dies unshriven.[339] In response to her son's prayers, the dead mother returns in a state of suffering to visit her son. *The Trental of St Gregory,* a *ca*. 1350 Middle English *exemplum* and one of the closest analogues to *Awntyrs*, describes the return of Gregory's mother: through 'lecherye, |That lust with love hire so be-gylede' (12-13).[340] *The Trental* plays on the notion of outward appearance belying her inward state; Gregory's mother even explicitly states: 'For I nas not such as I seemed' (91). As a result of the difference between exterior semblance of piety and interior moral depravity, the mother now appears as a 'helle-devel' surrounded in flame (64-65). The text, rather than focus on her suffering, focuses on Gregory's cure, effected through thirty trentals, which move her soul from purgatory to paradise; in *Awntyrs* the emphasis is on warning and moral correction to keep Guinevere from this same state.

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[338] While I examine the physical body as exemplifying the ghost's interior moral state, Shepherd and Phillips give special attention to the ghost's spiritual state and recovery towards grace. See Helen Phillips 'The Ghost's Baptism in *The Awntyrs Off Arthure'*, *Medium Ævum,* 58 (1989), 49-58 and Shepherd, '"Heathen" Catechesis', pp. 1-17.

[339] David N. Klausner, 'Exempla and *The Awntyrs of Arthure'*, *Mediaeval Studies,* 34 (1972), 307-25.

[340] 'The Trental of St Gregory' in *Middle English Romance*, ed. by Shepherd, pp. 369-375, with references to this edition by line number. Shepherd edits from the Vernon manuscript—a manuscript that also contains *The King of Tars* and *Robert of Cisyle.*

Through parallels to *exempla*, we can see that the sins for which Guinevere's mother suffered in life are now written on her psychosomatic body. *Exempla* accounts use the motifs of serpents and toads, considered poisonous in the Middle Ages, to symbolically represent the sins of lechery and vanity, and associate them with an unshriven death.[341] Furthermore, the sufferings recorded in a fifteenth-century *exemplum* from the *Gesta Romanorum* mirror those of Guinevere's mother.[342] In this account the suffering of the priest's mother are drastically emphasized.

> There aperid to hym a fourme of a woman, fro whose hede he sawe a derke flawme rise up; and on here lippes and on here tonge he sawe an horreble tode gnawe, and sesid not; and fro hire tetis he sawe hang .ii. serpentes, sore soukynge hem; and the skyn on here back was drawen downe to here hammes, and trayled after here, all on fyre.'[343]

Each torment displayed on her body correlates to a sin during her life. She suffers 'blew fire' for the lecherous adornment of her hair; the toads on her lips and tongue represent both vain speeches and lecherous kisses; the snakes that nurse on her teats represent the nourishment she gave to her two bastard children; and her burning skin represents the vanity of the clothes she wore in her life. In this *exemplum*, however, there is no possibility of salvation: the mother is in hell. The emphasis on suffering and description of torment explicitly recall descriptions of suffering in *Awntyrs*. The source material elucidates the suffering of Guinevere's mother as the sins of her life are written on her psychosomatic form; moreover, this suffering is so extreme that its description likens it to that of hell.

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[341] Caciola, 'Wraiths', p. 19. The description of this type of suffering I believe stems ultimately from *The Apocalypse of St Paul,* a third-century Greek account popular in the Middle Ages. Paul receives a vision of those suffering in hell, and one group is of young women 'black from head to toe, and delivered to dragons and serpents: these are girls who have sinned against chastity and caused their infant children to die', as recounted by Le Goff, pp. 36-37.

[342] 'Two *Exempla* from the *Gesta Romanorum',* in *Middle English Romance,* ed. by Shepherd, pp. 375-77. Shepherd edits two *exempla*: in the first, the mother is damned and in the second the son releases his mother from purgatory. Both texts are found in the British Library MS Additional 9066, which dates to *ca.* 1440, and Shepherd notes that the original English translation from Latin may have been twenty years prior to this (p. 375).

[343] 'Two *Exempla* from the *Gesta Romanorum:* I. *A Mother Eternally Damned Appears to Her Son',* in *Middle English Romance*, ed. by Shepherd, pp. 375-76 (ll. 12-19).

In fact, in order to persuade Guinevere and its audience toward correction, the text deliberately displays the revenant's tortures as those of hell. Guinevere's mother describes her location of suffering, the Tarn Wadling, which accords with the location of torment assigned to the prince of all the damned: 'With Lucyfer in a lake logh am I light' (164). She suffers torment from devils: 'Ther folo me a ferde of fendes of helle; |They hurle me unhendely; thei harme me in hight; (186-87). Furthermore, she burns: 'In bras and in brymston I bren as a belle' (188). Her location of suffering is in a lake (214, 164). The combination of perpetual burning and description of lake combine to evoke the hellish lake of fire. Shepherd even draws this comparison: 'The lake is thus to be understood not just as the Tarn Wadling but as a representation of the abyss of hell.'[344] For Guinevere's mother there is no beatific vision, no respite from torment, and no indication that her suffering is not the same as that of those who suffer in hell. In order to achieve the fullest possible effect of moral correction, the compiler of *Awntyrs* deliberately depicts the suffering of Guinevere's mother as that of hell itself.

The *Awntyrs* describes the torments of hell of the afterlife in such an explicit manner in order to show that, with the development of purgatory, the sufferings of hell are not only for the damned.[345] As discussed in the introduction, the early Middle Ages viewed Judgement Day, the resurrection of the body, as the moment an individual's final resting place in the afterlife was revealed. However, during the Middle Ages, these ideas shifted to allow the notion of immediate judgement at the moment of death, for the soul to be told its location in the afterlife. At first these destinations were either heaven or hell, but a key biblical verse, 'he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire' (I Cor 3:15), contributed to the development of the concept of purgatory: a purging fire for the

[344] Shepherd, 225 n. 2. In religious teaching, the lake of fire is the location for suffering for those not saved: 'And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire' (Rev. 20:15).
[345] For a discussion on the difference between hell and purgatory in relation to *The Pricke of Conscience*, see *Awntyrs,* ed. by Hanna, pp. 25-32 (p. 25).

Christian sinner to prepare the soul for paradise. Jacques Le Goff demonstrates that 'before being considered a place, Purgatory was first conceived as a kind of fire'.[346] Le Goff also demonstrates that medieval thought often conflated the sufferings of hell and purgatory: 'For a long time Christianity's purgatorial places would be very similar to Hell or even part of it'.[347] This conflation between hell and purgatory appears in an *exemplum* told by Caesarius of Heisterbach where a dead usurer appears to his wife and tells her that, through her penitential actions, he has been saved from hell.[348] While the monk explains that this was actually purgatory, hell and purgatory appear identical to the sufferer. The author of *Awntyrs* applies this version of theology in order to clearly enunciate to Guinevere the full repercussions of her actions: although her own mother was baptized and christened, this did not exempt her from enduring the suffering of hell.

Thus far we have seen the transformative nature of death. Somatic transformation has been displayed on the body of Guinevere's mother through descriptions of her black bones and her body covered in dirt and wracked by worms. Death also initiates spiritual transformation: the moment the soul receives Divine Judgement. We also have seen that this spiritually transformed body now endures spiritual punishment. Further to this, through powerful theological examples, we have seen that the sins of Guinevere's mother are written on her very body. Moreover, the development of the doctrine of purgatory allows the text to deliberately liken her purgatorial suffering to hellish torment. If unrepentant, not even the baptised Christian may escape hellfire or its like. The spiritual status of Guinevere's mother is etched on her psychosomatic form. Death entails both physical and spiritual transformations. It ushers the soul into the judgement of God, and the unrepentant sinner must suffer the torments of hell on the psychosomatic body. The

[346] Le Goff, *Purgatory,* p. 43.
[347] Le Goff, *Purgatory,* p. 204, 44. See also Schmitt, *Ghosts,* 178-79.
[348] As recorded by Le Goff, *Purgatory,* p. 304; also commented on by Schmitt, *Ghosts,* pp. 124-29.

transformed body of Guinevere's mother has so far stood as the largest means of correction.

Now Guinevere's mother, having used her body to effect correction, earnestly entreats her daughter to repent and she does so by creating a sense of complicity between herself and Guinevere. The ghost describes her descent from a royal lineage; her public appearance of adhering to Christian doctrine, including both baptism and christening; the degree of her beauty, and the extent of her political empire. In a direct comparison, she even boasts that in life she had far more wealth than her daughter ('Gretter then Dame Gaynour', 147). The ghost describes her great beauty, 'My ler as the lelé lonched on hight' (162), which parallels the grand description of Guinevere's courtly apparel at the opening of the narrative (15-26). Moreover, Guinevere's mother commits adultery—the flagrant sin of Guinevere in Arthurian tradition, and further to this, Guinevere alone knew the sins her mother committed ('And no man wist hit but thowe', 206). It appears that the sins of the mother have indeed been visited on the offspring—like mother, like daughter.

Through the affinities between mother and daughter, the ghost directly invokes her daughter's gaze on her physically transformed body, causing it to function as a warning. Her mother explicitly states that Guinevere's own fate stands before her:

> For al thi fressh foroure,
> Muse on my mirrour;
> For, king and emperour,
> Thus dight shul ye be. (166-69)

The body of Guinevere's mother, so effectively transformed, mirrors Guinevere's future suffering. In light of this, she begs her daughter to take warning. Using all the means at her disposal, she emphasises her current likeness to Lucifer to sway her daughter toward repentance: 'Thus am I lyke to Lucefere; takis witnes by mee!' (165). This may be a symbolic interpretation: in medieval religious thought Lucifer was considered an angel of

heaven, more beautiful than any other, who fell from God's presence due to his pride.[349] A beautiful being fallen low through pride resounds with Guinevere's mother and potentially with Guinevere herself. Moreover, the ghost distinguishes between Guinevere's present happiness and her mother's present suffering: 'With riche dayntés on des thi diotes ar dight, |And I, in danger and doel, in dongone I dwelle', (183-84). These future sufferings are promised to Guinevere. The revenant even manipulates the personal relationship, the tie between mother and daughter, to give force behind her command: 'Thus dethe wil you dight, thare you not doute; |Thereon hertly take hede while thou art here' (170-71). Guinevere's mother uses the certainty of death, and the somatic and spiritual transformations death entails, to encourage her daughter toward moral correction: 'Be war by my wo!' (195).

Guinevere's mother, by forcing her daughter to gaze on her transformed, macabre body, engages with *memento mori* tradition, which encouraged individuals, through macabre encounters with death, to contemplate their own mortality. Three key texts inform this tradition. The first, *Summer Sunday* (12th C), displays four kings—on the ascent, height, and descent from power; the fourth king is merely a dead corpse.[350] The second, the *De Tribus Regibus Mortuis* or *The Three Living and the Three Dead,* details three monarchs who encounter their three dead fathers, who are portrayed as decayed, macabre bodies and reflect the likeness of the living kings' future selves.[351] The dead bodies lament: 'Lo here þe wormus in my wome! […] Lokys on my bonus þat blake bene and bare!' (98, 106), which correlates to descriptions of Guinevere's mother (216-17). The warning from the revenant father is effective: the living kings return, repent, and build a chapel whose walls

[349] See Jeffrey Burton Russell, *Lucifer: the Devil in the Middle Ages* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).
[350] *Somer Soneday,* in *Alliterative Poetry of the Later Middle Ages: An Anthology,* ed. by Thorlac Turville-Petre (London: Routledge, 1989), pp. 140-47. *Summer Sunday* dates to the late fourteenth or early fifteenth century.
[351] *De Tribus Regibus Mortuis,* in *Alliterative Poetry,* ed. by Turville-Petre, pp. 148-57, with references to this edition to line number. *Alliterative Poetry*. This text also uses the term 'gostis' to name the returned dead kings. Rooney discusses this text as founding a macabre archetype. See Rooney, pp. 1-13, 213-21.

depict their encounter. The third text, *A Disputation betwixt the Body and Worms*, describes a conversation between a dead female corpse and the worms that now ravish her body.[352] In *A Disputation* the corpse's ravishment by worms alludes to sexual sins the corpse may have committed in life. This too is revealed in *Awntyrs*. The ghost laments, 'With the wilde wormes that worche me wrake; Wrake thei me worchen' (216-17). The sexual connotations here are supported as the ghost has revealed she now suffers as a result of adulterous love. All three *memento mori* texts, and *Awntyrs* along with them, offer an invitation to gaze on the macabre transformations effected by death in order to inspire contemplations of one's own mortality, and, importantly, moral correction.

This emphasis on contemplating mortality is underscored by the ghost's arrival through direct evocations to judgement day. The Arthurian hunt is interrupted by a violent change in the weather and it begins to sleet and snow, which occurs at the supernaturally potent hour of 'undre'—the moment just before noon. In monasteries, 'undre' was thought to be a time of great vulnerability to temptation—through lassitude or boredom.[353] Further to this, 'The day wex also dirke | As hit were midnight myrke' (75-76). Darkness at noon, as Margaret Robson points out, signifies Judgement Day.[354] The minor Old Testament prophet Joel also correlates the Day of Judgement with darkening of the sun:

> The sun will be turned to darkness
> and the moon to blood
> before the coming of the great
> and dreadful day of the Lord.
> And everyone who calls
> on the name of the Lord will be saved. (Joel 2: 31-32)

[352] *A Disputation betwixt the Body and Worms,* in *Middle English Debate Poetry: A Critical Anthology*, ed. by John W. Conlee (East Lansing, MI: Colleagues Press, 1991), pp. 50-62. See also Rooney, pp. 185-92.
[353] *Middle English Romances,* ed. by Shepherd, 222 n. 1; Lowe, pp. 212, 215; Hanna, 'An Interpretation', p. 287.
[354] See 'Darkness at Noon', *The Spirit of […] Romance*, ed. by Putter and Gilbert, pp. 228-29. Margaret Robson indicates that Langland's *Piers Plowman* (XVIII. 59-62) describes Judgement Day with darkening sun.

These powerful indicators of darkness at noon, Judgement Day, and the prescribed response of repentance are well known signals of the Last Things in the Middle Ages—widely evidenced in medieval iconography, in Mystery Plays, and in devotional literature. The reader knows that all is not well in Arthur's court when, instead of the responding with fear and penitence at these vivid markers of the Last Judgement, Arthur's response is to become annoyed ('Thereof the King was irke', 77) and Gawain attributes it to scientific phenomenon of an eclipse ('Hit is the clippes of the son', 94). Moreover, Judgement Day, as Margaret Robson indicates, marked the moment the dead will rise from their graves.[355] With this in mind, perhaps it comes as less of a shock that during this darkness, a figure emerges from the Tarn. Moreover, thoughts of Judgement Day may certainly occur to Guinevere for, when she sees the revenant, she curses Sirs Cadous, Clegis, Cosntantyne, and Caye who 'have me laft on my deth-day | With the grisselist goost that ever herd I grede!' (99). Guinevere interprets the ghost's arrival as her 'deth-day'—the day of her spiritual judgement. The ghost's somatically transformed, macabre body, coupled with the harbingers of coming judgement, have successfully shocked Guinevere into contemplations of her own mortality.

While the ghost's explicit warning to Guinevere is an indication of her guilt, a guilt so heinous it necessitates her return from the dead, the text does not name Guinevere's sin. Scholars have noted that one must look within the broader Arthurian context of Guinevere's role in the fall of the Round Table to define her sin, particularly, as Shepherd notes, at her illicit love affair with Lancelot.[356] The majority of critics point

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[355] Ibid., p. 229.

[356] *Awntyrs,* ed. by Shepherd, 226 n. 8. Robert Gates indicates that the conclusion of the Round Table the ghost foresees aligns with the action in the *Alliterative Morte* and Geoffrey of Monmouth (pp. 26-29). Yet, within the *Alliterative Morte*, there is no trace of Guinevere's love for Lancelot, and Guinevere's elopement with Mordred seems more political than anything else; see *King Arthur's Death: The Middle English Stanzaic Morte Arthur and Alliterative Morte*, ed. by Larry D. Benson, rev. by Edward E. Foster, TEAMS (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1994), pp. 2-3. The ghost in *Awntyrs* says the Round Table will fall because of a knight in a black coat of arms, but at this moment, 'the barne playes at the balle' (310). The *Awntyrs* clearly describes Mordred as a child. If the *Awntyrs* is indeed speaking to the *Alliterative Morte* tradition, Guinevere has had no affair with Lancelot, and presumably, has not had an affair with Mordred yet either,

to sexual sin in tandem with pride and *luxuria*.[357] The sins exemplified in analogues, the sins of Guinevere's mother, and Guinevere's own reputation all combine to suggest that Guinevere's sins are indeed sexual, but the text carefully avoids a direct indictment and never directly names Guinevere's failures. While the *Awntyrs* ghost makes an explicit plea for Guinevere's moral correction, the text also plays with notions of 'pryvetee': whatever sins Guinevere has committed, these are for her alone to confess.

Yet Guinevere makes no confession in *Awntyrs*. While Guinevere does find the display of her mother's body affective ('If thou be my moder, grete mervaile hit is |That al thi burly body is broughte to be so bare!' 202-03), rather than focus on her own repentance, Guinevere seeks to alleviate her mother's suffering. Guinevere extravagantly agrees to conduct a million masses for her mother (236) and, at the poem's conclusion, Guinevere does ensure these trentals are completed. However, the poem makes no mention of Guinevere completing the prescriptions for her own soul. Guinevere's mother encourages Guinevere, in her unique position of power, to 'Have pité on the poer' (173); this kindness to the poor, through their prayers for her after she departs, may purchase Guinevere peace. Schmitt writes on the similarities between the poor and the dead:

> [The poor] were considered to be the terrestrial substitutes for the dead people, since the alms they received made up the "suffrages" that helped in the salvation of the dead. Giving material nourishment to the poor was the same as symbolically "nourishing," through prayers, the dead benefactors' souls in purgatory.[358]

This underscores the parting words of Guinevere's mother who describes masses as medicine for her soul and simultaneously urges Guinevere to 'Fede folke for my sake that failen the fode' (319). While the romance concludes with Guinevere's execution of the

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as he is still a child. This seems to suggest that either Guinevere's sin is not necessarily adultery, or else, the text alludes to a conflation of plot-lines between the *Alliterative Morte Arthur* and the Stanzaic *Morte Arthur*. While Guinevere's actions may indeed contribute to the fall of the Round Table, that day is not yet at hand.

[357] Klausner, 'Exempla and *The Awntyrs',* p. 310; Jost, p. 136; Hanna, 'An Interpretation', p. 290; Thompson, 'Muse on þi mirrour...', pp. 204-05; Leah Haught, 'Ghostly Mothers and Fated Fathers: Gender and Genre in *The Awntyrs off Arthu*r', *Arthuriana,* 20 (2010), 3-24 (p. 5).

[358] Schmitt, pp. 33-34.

thirty trentals, the text provides no evidence that Guinevere adopts the virtues promoted by her mother (meekness, mercy, charity) or abstains from vices her mother displayed (pride and lechery). Leah Haught notes that the romance ends on an indefinite note, while Ralph Hanna is less forgiving and connects Guinevere's failure to comprehend her mother's message to the fall of the Round Table.[359]

The liminal figure of the ghost is explicitly concerned with conveying warnings for moral correction. She visibly portrays the somatic and spiritual transformations death effects. The combination of suffering the pains of hell whilst in purgatory, the macabre image of a decaying corpse, direct comparisons between mother and daughter, and echoes of Judgement Day compound to persuasively deliver their message of interior correction. Yet interior moral change in either Guinevere, or the Round Table at large, is indefinite. Guinevere does complete the thirty trentals for her mother, but like Shakespeare's Malvolio or Shylock, the audience witnesses no indication of internal change, nor does the ghost return to describe her bliss as she does in *The Trental*. *Awntyrs* concludes with the possibility that even though the most extreme supernatural visitations occur, displaying to the utmost how far the human body may be transformed, the individual in questions retains autonomy, and the 'pryvetee', either to accept or reject these warnings—or store up the visitation as a deterrent against future temptation to sin.

Sir Amadace

Sir Amadace, a late fourteenth-century romance, also explores the themes of personal moral development through liminal figures who act as agents of correction. In this romance, the agent of moral correction employs two bodily forms to achieve his purpose. The first form is that of his decomposed corpse as a merchant; the second is that of a

[359] Haught, p. 17; and Hanna, 'An Interpretation', p. 290. Jean Jost argues that neither Guinevere nor Gawain nor Arthur take the corrective warning offered by the ghost (p. 140). Also Christine Chism, *Alliterative Revivals* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), p. 251.

revenant White Knight. Like *Awntyrs*, *Sir Amadace* employs macabre imagery of physical decay in order to effect correction. However, thanks to Amadace, the dead body is put to rest and returns as an angelic revenant—clad all in white and unrecognizable from his decaying body. The dead merchant and the White Knight, two guises of the same person, both effect correction in Amadace and draw on the tropes, discussed in previous chapters, of disguise and persons being 'not what they seem'. The romance draws on the folklore motifs of the spendthrift knight and the grateful dead—two tropes which are fully analysed by Gordon Gerould in *The Grateful Dead.*[360] While *Amadace* has no direct source, its closest analogues lie, as with *Awntyrs*, in the *exempla* tradition.[361]

The opening lines of the manuscript, whilst damaged, attest to Amadace's fault—his spendthrift habits. The romance opens with Amadace's steward suggesting ways he might economize. Amadace, perhaps realistically, divines the reaction of people in his hometown to his poverty. He envisions a situation not unlike Shakespeare's *Timon of Athens*, and rather than endure public scorn and merciless creditors, chooses to mortgage his lands and depart with six attendants. Before he leaves, he decides to 'gif full ryche giftus' to squires and knights and 'to pore men dele a dole' (40-42).[362] This extravagant expenditure, in time of want, appears unwise. Patricia Harkins names Amadace's vices of prodigality and concealing bankruptcy.[363] Mills too calls him prodigal and Rooney notes

[360] Gordon Hall Gerould, *The Grateful Dead: The History of a Folk Story,* The Folk-Lore Society (London: D. Nutt, 1908).
[361] See Michael Johnston, 'Knights and Merchants Unite: *Sir Amadace,* the Grateful dead, and the Moral Exemplum Tradition', *Neophilologus,* 92 (2008), 735-44. Through the sources Johnston discusses, only the French *exemplum*, *Ci Nous Dit* retains the emphasis on class—the merchant and the knight interaction.
[362] *Sir Amadace* exists in two manuscripts, National Library of Scotland, MS Advocates 19.3.1. and Princeton University Library, MS Taylor 9 (Ireland Blackburn MS), and both begin without their introduction. MS Taylor 9 also contains a portion of *The Trental of St Gregory*. See Martin Connolly, 'Promise-Postponement Device in *The Awntyrs Off Arthure:* A Possible Narrative Model', *Arthurian Literature,* 23 (2006), 95-108. *Sir Amadace* has been edited by Maldwyn Mills in *Six Middle English Romances*, pp. 169-92 and more recently by Edward Foster, *Amis and Amiloun, Robert of Cisyle, and Sir Amadace,* TEAMS (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 1997), pp. 95-123. All references hereafter follow Foster's edition to line number.
[363] Patricia Harkins, 'The Speaking Dead in *Sir Amadace and the White Knight'*, *Journal of the Fantastic in the Arts*, 3 (1994), 62-71 (p. 66).

the sin of profligacy.[364] Putter believes that Amadace must develop costly generosity, while Edward Foster writes his fault is 'excessive, but basically admirable, liberality; he may be foolish, but he is not evil.'[365] Spendthrift knights appear in romances such as *Sir Launfal* and *Cliges,* and generosity (*largesse*) in the Middle Ages was considered an inherently noble quality. However, such generosity also entails severe, spiritual consequences. In order to affect in Amadace a correct paradigm of largesse, as well as the right relationship between gifts and the giver of these goods, the romance displays the dangerous consequences of excessive generosity.

The visible consequences of excessive generosity are written on the body of the dead merchant Amadace and his retinue discover. Through brutal, macabre imagery, the text describes the natural transformations of an unburied corpse through striking sensual imagery. The narrative first notes the transformations of decay through repeated descriptions of an unbearable stench. Amadace's knave is struck by a foul stench: 'Butte suche a stinke in the chapel he hade, | That dwell ether he ne myghte' (71-72), so strong that the knave could not remain in the chapel ('Ther myghte I ne lengur abide', 95). The overwhelming sensual imagery is again reiterated by Amadace's squire: 'Butte in his nace smote such a smell, | That there myghte he no lengur duelle' (103-04), and again by Amadace himself ('That he nevyr are hade such a stynke', 125). The unusual emphasis on sensual imagery iterates in the graphic terms of the macabre nature of this rotting corpse. However, this unusual vision of the transformative details of death occurs because the corpse has been denied proper burial and forced to rot for sixteen weeks.[366] *Amadace* uses

[364] *Six Romances,* ed. by Mills, p. xix; and Ad Putter, 'Gifts and Commodities in *Sir Amadace', The Review of English Studies*, 51 (2000), 371-94 (p. 376).
[365] Rooney, p. 94; Edward Foster, 'Simplicity, Complexity, and Morality in Four Medieval Romances'*, The Chaucer Review*, 31 (1997), 401-419 (p. 406).
[366] Christopher Daniel makes note of bodies being moved from the house lest the house's inhabitants should die from the stench. See *Death in Medieval England,* p. 44.

the shock of rotting flesh in order to pack a punch: this corpse has been left to rot and cruelly denied burial by the man's merciless creditors.

Amadace sees the consequences of the merchant's extravagant largesse, with such affinity to his own, written on the dead merchant's body. In light of his wife's warning, the merchant merely emphasised the generous nature of God (164). The merchant's death leaves his estate, his poor widow, and his very body to the mercy of the creditors. They plunder his entire estate leaving the merchant's widow destitute. One creditor, denied full compensation, becomes so angry that he denies the corpse burial, 'and sayd, howundus schuld his bodi to draw, | Then on the fild his bonus tognaue' (190-91). The creditors' ability to control the assets of dead debtors, even to the harm of their families, was apparently familiar in the Middle Ages. In one account, a when a creditor pursues the man's son, claiming his father had not paid his debts, this prompts the return of his dead father, as revenant, to tell his son where the receipt was hidden.[367] A disinterred body also incurrs spiritual consequences. Burial was so important in medieval thought that it was considered the seventh work of mercy.[368] This merchant is one of the ill-fated dead described by Schmitt, who were lacking a final burial places.[369] Moreover, the dead merchant's debts cause the 'normal ritual of separation from the deceased' to be interrupted: Schmitt argues that revenants appeared when 'close survivors […] through greed or negligence, had broken the ritual rules and deprived the soul of the deceased of the salutary support of suffrages from clerics'.[370] The greed of the creditor disrupts the dead man's normal rites of passage into the afterlife by denying his corpse proper burial and suffrages from clerics. While Schmitt's description explains the reason for this dead

[367] Schmitt, p. 21, 136.
[368] On burial as the seventh work of mercy, see Putter, 'Gifts and Commodities', p. 376 and Daniel, p. 20. On bodies buried in unhallowed graves, and of preventative measures people took to ensure they did not come back as revenants. See Caciola, pp. 29-32.
[369] Schmitt, p. 12.
[370] Ibid., p. 6.

merchant to return as the revenant White Knight, it also powerfully displays the spiritual power which creditors had over a merchant's body: delaying this man's burial delays his ultimate spiritual rest. Somatic forms relate to spiritual states.

The affinities between Amadace and the merchant revealed by the encounter with the decaying body cause Amadace to consider his own interior state. Through the merchant's widow, Amadace discovers that the merchant's largesse rivalled his own. Like Amadace, he 'wold gaffe hom giftus gay' (150); moreover, he threw rich feats, fed the poor, and clothed more men in winter than a noble knight (145-60). On hearing this, Amadace immediately considers his past deeds of largesse with regret: 'Unnethe he myghte forgoe to wepe, |For his dedus him sore forthoghte' (206-07). As Maldwyn Mills writes, 'from one point of view this corpse is plainly a last warning to him; if he persists in his ways, he can expect no better end.'[371] This warning is further emphasized as Amadace sups with the merchant's creditor, who says, 'God gif him a sore grace, | And all suche waisters as he wasse' (247-48). The creditor includes Amadace in his sweeping indictment against all spendthrifts. Amadace himself sees himself as the rotting debtor when he says, the merchant 'myghte full wele be of my kynne | For ryghte so have I wroghte' (209-10). The state of the merchant's rotting (transformed) body serves as a mirror to Amadace of the consequences of his own actions. The merchant's transformed body, through denied burial, affects Amadace's own moral state.

Amadace, however, sees so much of himself in the dead debtor, that, in an act reminiscent of the tale of the widow's mite, he generously gives the last of his wealth in order to put the dead merchant to (spiritual) rest, an act which Ad Putter describes as fulfilling the seventh work of mercy.[372] He not only repays the stranger's debts, but also provides him spiritual respite: 'I schall for him gere rede and singe, | Bringe his bodi to

[371] *Six Romances*, ed. by Mills, p. xx.
[372] Putter, 'Gifts and Commodities', p. 376.

Cristun berunge' (284-85). Amadace ensures the body's proper burial and enlists clerics to sing masses for the merchant. Amadace even contributes the costly gift of bell-ringing, the price of which was set exorbitantly high in order to reduce its noisy and disruptive occurrence.[373] Rather than save his remaining ten pounds, Amadace provides a feast for this man's interment, and while at the feast, pays special attention to the poor: 'Sir Amadace wold noghte sitte downe, | Butte to serve the pore folke he was full bowne, | For thay lay his hert nere' (319-21). Amadace's sacrifice resounds, intentional or not, with that of the widow's mite, when the text reads, 'he hade spendut all that he myghte' (347). In Amadace's behaviour, he exemplifies the attributes recommended by Guinevere's mother. He feeds the poor, says masses for the dead, and by giving away his last mite, demonstrates the opposite character trait to Arthur's sin of avarice. Schmitt expounds on the similarities between almsgiving and the dead—noting that giving the poor alms was equated to praying for dead souls.[374] Amadace's generosity proves spiritually nourishing to the dead merchant's soul and through his physical interment obtains spiritual rest. Rather than see this man as an emblem of what to expect and thereby avoid future expenditure, Amadace demonstrates largesse so extravagant it ensures the debtor's soul is taken care of.

The body, visibly offering Amadace a mirror of his own likeness, effects interior correction in Amadace. As Amadace departs from the city, he immediately implements the corrective warning written on the merchant's body. Rather than foolishly promise his men future wages, and incur greater debt, he dismisses his entire remaining retinue—his 'stuard', 'sometour' (pack-horse driver), and 'palfray mon' (groom). However, he dismisses his squire, yeoman, and knave with the final gifts he possesses: he gives them the horses on which they ride, 'tho warst hors is worthe ten pownde' (374) and the

[373] Putter, 'Gifts and Commodities', p. 377. Bell-ringing was also intended to ward off demons in the soul's flight to the afterlife and because this was such an important task, was also costly. See Daniel, p. 53.
[374] Schmitt, pp. 33-34.

accompanying gear. His costly generosity embraces aspects of both *largesse* and economy and gestures to Amadace's implementation of a monetary paradigm shift through his encounter with the merchant. This further act of generosity completely reduces Amadace. He is now alone and has no further recourse to money, which causes him to throw himself onto the mercies of divine providence. Amadace further displays a corrective paradigm shift through his prayer of succour and repentance. Now isolated and destitute, he confesses that:

> For all for wonting of my witte,
> Fowle of the lond am I putte,
> Of my frindes I have made foes;
> For kyndenes of my gud wille,
> I am in poynte myselfe to spille. (421-25)

He recognizes the consequences of his generous actions, and the flaws that have led him to this point: deficiency of reason and kindness so reckless that it leads to self-destruction. Amadace submits himself to divine benevolence and pleads that help be sent:

> For summe of Thi sokur and Thu me send,
> And yette I schuld ful gladely spende
> On all that mestur hase. (430-32)

Amadace articulates this request for divine succour in terms of expenditure: any help that Christ sends, Amadace will 'ful gladely spende'. As Ad Putter demonstrates, medieval thought considered God himself rich in *largesse*, and to give generously to those who asked in their need.[375] The corrective measures of the decaying corpse constitute Amadace's spiritual repentance of profligacy. The first transformed body has effected interior correction.

Directly in response to this prayer, a White Knight appears.[376] Unbeknownst to Amadace, the White Knight is the revenant of the merchant. This is the second transformed body to effect correction in Amadace. While Amadace repents of his

[375] Putter, 'Gifts and Commodities', pp. 379-80.
[376] A prayer opening further supernatural action is also found in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*: Gawain prays to discover the residence of the Green Knight and immediately finds it.

profligacy, the White Knight appears in response to his pleas for divine succour, in order to correct his fundamental perception of goods. The White Knight seeks to test and to correct Amadace's conception of gifts and goods. He displays the crux of the test when he asks Amadace: 'Wold thu luffe him avre all thing | That wold the owte of thi mourning bringe, | And kevyr the owte of kare?' (470-71). The question, in effect, is which do you love more: the giver of good gifts or the gifts themselves? It seems that this question is immediately put to the test. The White Knight supplies Amadace with the means to attain all his former wealth and glory. In return, the White Knight asks that all goods be split evenly between the two of them: 'That evyn to part between us toe | The godus thu has wonun and spedde' (503-04). The White Knight even articulates the goods that Amadace will receive. He points Amadace to a shipwreck where he will acquire the wealth to employ a retinue and to joust in a tournament—the prizes of which include many fields, woods, towns, towers, *and* marriage to the king's daughter. The good gifts that the White Knight will bestow, and of which he will require his half when he returns, include both possessions and people. By requiring Amadace to return half these goods to the White Knight, he will elicit from Amadace which he loves more: the gifts themselves or their giver.

Ad Putter expounds on the nature of gift-giving in the Middle Ages and within *Amadace*. He demonstrates that God himself is the most generous gift-giver—most fully demonstrated when he gave his own son to die in man's stead.[377] These ideas, of Jesus dying and of God as generous giver, are repeated throughout the romance. The romance is riddled with epithets such as 'Be God, that me dere boghte' (742) and 'His luffe thet deut on tre' (745; 760, 456-59). The role of God as giver of gifts and forgiver of debts is also emphasized. To the merchant, Amadace says 'Thenke that God forgave his dede'

[377] Putter, 'Gifts and Commodities', p. 388.

(254). As his retinue departs, Amadace reminds them: 'Yet God may me sende of his sele [largesse]' (367). And the White Knight reminds Amadace, 'For God may bothe mon falle and rise, | For his helpe is evrymor nere. | For gud His butte a lante lone' (452-54). The romance uses the language of expenditure to describe God's own gifts. Roger Dalrymple has demonstrated that these phrases are not merely pious asides, but importantly ground the text.[378] Moreover, Ad Putter argues that the goods that God gives include both material possessions as well as, in light of the gift of his own Son, people.[379] The White Knight intends to orient Amadace to the ultimate giver of good gifts, rather than to the gifts themselves.

The White Knight tests the implementation of this principle by giving Amadace many good gifts, including possessions and people. Immediately after Amadace parts from the White Knight, he discovers the treasure trove from the remains of the ship wreck, including horses, clothing, and chests filled with gold. Duly supplied, Amadace triumphs in the joust and exponentially increases his assets. The king arranges for Amadace to marry his daughter, and in the proposal, the king emphasizes the nature of gift-giving. The king describes his daughter as Amadace's reward ('ho be to yaure paye', 630). In the marriage negotiations the king tells Amadace, 'Here a gifte schall I yo gife' (634): in addition to his daughter, he will give Amadace half of his kingdom. Amadace clearly thanks the king for his 'gyfftes'—in the plural (639). In the marriage negotiations, while both property and the princess are clearly gifts, Amadace only considers those of immediate monetary value.

> A hundrithe sedis he wan and moe,
> And gave the king the ton the halve of thoe,
> Butte ther other til his felo keput he. (610-12)

[378] *Language and Piety,* as cited above.
[379] Putter, 'Gifts and Commodities', p. 388-89.

Amadace still implements his largesse; and he demonstrates that he loves the givers of these goods, the king and the White Knight, by dividing his winnings between the two, and it would seem, keeping none for himself. Perhaps some of Amadace's imperfection regarding finances is exemplified in light of his acquisition of wealth. Despite his financial recovery, Amadace makes no effort to seek out his creditors and repay the debt he owes them. Instead, Amadace demonstrates he loves the givers of these recently acquired gifts in his *largesse* towards the king and repayment to the White Knight. However, Amadace clearly considers material possessions the only gifts he must repay the White Knight.

When the White Knight returns, he tests whether Amadace loves the giver of the gifts or the gifts themselves in troubling ways. He returns, dismissing Amadace's warm greetings, and curtly demands his share of the bargain. Extensive lands, castle, towns, woods, waters, forests, rich rings, silver, and gold—the White Knight lists all of Amadace's newly acquired assets and rejects them all. His demands as creditor lie much closer to the heart: 'Half thi child, and halfe thi wyve' (732). The liminal nature of the White Knight suddenly appears sinister—a shock which Amadace voices: 'But my lady for to sloe, | Me thinke grete synne hit ware' (749-50). In an attempt to sway the White Knight, Amadace even begs him to 'take all that evyr I have | Wythe thi, that ye hur life save' (739-40). Amadace, willing to surrender all of his worldly possessions and be reduced to his former penury, demonstrates he loves people more than possessions. At the same time, Amadace also realizes his wife has been a gift: 'Alas! [...] That evyr I this woman wan | Or any wordes gode' (733-35). The White Knight plays upon this distinction in Amadace's affection. When the lady orders her son be brought to her, the White Knight asks: 'Quether of hom luffus thu mare?' (776). Amadace believes the White Knight to be addressing Amadace's wife and child, and indeed this is in fact the case, but the question itself possesses a haunting reminder of the White Knight's earlier question: 'Wold thu luffe him avre all thing | That wold the owte of this mournyng bringe?' (469-

70). The White Knight clearly demands an affirmative answer to this question by depriving Amadace of the one gift he loves more than its giver. And so he demands Amadace cleave his wife in two.

While the White Knight's request is deeply disturbing, it draws on the biblical precedent of Abraham's sacrifice of his son Isaac. After Isaac is born, God asks Abraham to sacrifice his son. Theologians have postulated that this was in fact because Abraham loved his son, the good gift, more than God himself.[380] Both Abraham and Amadace intend to slay their prized possession: 'Then Sir Amadace a squrd uppehente, | To strike the ladi was his entente | And thenne the quite knyghte bede "Sese!"' (799-800). The intention to sacrifice one's dearest possession, rather than the act itself, appears sufficient in both the biblical text and the romance. Amadace, like Abraham, demonstrates that by freely giving up his prized gift and by his submission to the White Knight's request that he loves the giver of the good gifts more than gifts themselves.

Now that Amadace's affections are ordered in a manner that pleases the White Knight, the White Knight returns the gifts to Amadace. 'He toke uppe the ladi, and the litull knave, | And to Sir Amadace ther he hom gave' (802-03). Moreover, correction having been accomplished, the White Knight drops his stern demeanor. He sympathizes with Amadace's distress, correlating Amadace's woe to his own distress when he lay unburied in the chapel.[381] The White Knight reveals he was the merchant debtor, and that he was so grateful for the act of largesse Amadace performed, that 'Ther I besoghte God schuld kevyr the of thi care' (814). The bond that draws Amadace to the dead merchant has clearly carried over into the White Knight's transformed state. Just as Amadace greets the White Knight as his own brother, the White Knight finally returns Amadace's

[380] Genesis 22. See A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit of God* (Harrisburg, PA: Christian Publications Inc., 1948), pp. 24-28.
[381] See Elizabeth Williams, 'Sir Amadace and the Undisenchanted Bride: the Relatin of the Middle English Romance to the Folktale Tradition of "The Grateful Dead"', *Tradition and Transformation,* ed. by Field, pp. 57-70. See also Rooney, p. 96.

affectionate welcome when he calls Amadace, 'mynne awne true fere!' (817). How strange that this affectionate kinship has survived the transformation that takes place between the dead body's interment and the White Knight's return, and that Amadace has forged this bond with the figure's two separate identities.

The transformation from the dead merchant's corpse to the White Knight is hinted at in the text. The White Knight indicates that he now resides in a celestial sphere. The White Knight reveals himself as a divine supernatural agent sent by God to restore Amadace's fortunes ('Ther I besoghte God schuld kevyr the of thi care' 814). While he is indeed revenant (returned), his bodily form of rot and decay, so striking in *Awntyrs*, has been replaced with a liminal spiritual one. The White Knight is solely identified by his white apparel. When the White Knight speaks with Amadace's porter, he gives no name and only provides the porter with one qualifer: 'say him [to Amadace] my sute is quite' (669). The disguised angel in *Robert of Cisyle* also wears only white.[382] Moreover, the White Knight's 'lenging [dwelling] is no lengur her' (818) and 'he glode away as dew in towne' (824). Unlike Guinevere's mother, whose purgatorial place is on the earth, the White Knight's residence clearly is not. Perhaps Amadace's numerous masses have been effective and accelerated the White Knight beyond purgatorial correction.[383] If this is indeed the case, it may explain the difference between the decaying revenant of *Awntyrs* and the wholesome, spiritual form of the White Knight. Although the White Knight

[382] Rooney speculates on the nature of the White Knight. He notes that the White Knight combines attributes of the saintly dead, the angelic, the faery otherworld, and ghosts, yet the White Knight does not 'conform readily to any one interpretation of its nature among its audience' (p. 97). As shown in this paragraph, I disagree. The White Knight certainly evokes both the faery and the Christian supernatural, but the White Knight signifies much more than merely admonitions to 'treat the dead with caution' or that 'the dead remain [...] much to be feared' (p. 98). The evidence of *Sir Amadace* marshals itself towards a revenant returned to earth as a Christian supernatural agent in order to administer correction.

[383] Schmitt records a tale told in Gregory's *Dialogues* of a monk who confesses a sin on his deathbed; the monk dies and for his penance, Gregory refuses to allow the body to be interred for thirty days, after which they sing mass for the dead monk for the next thirty days (a trental). After this, the monk appears to his brother to announce that he had received communion (Schmitt, p. 32). The unburied corpse appears to be atoning for his sins, and propelled by the masses, seems to have ascended beyond purgatory. The combination of masses and an unburied body both influencing the soul's progression find interesting parallels with *Amadace*.

refuses meat and drink, he is indeed corporeal: he hands Amadace his wife and child. This body, transformed through death and spiritual perfecting, has been granted divine license to return to earth in a somatic, yet liminal form. This liminal body need not obey terrestrial laws of nature ('he glode away as dew', 824). Death, combined with proper burial complete with masses, has transformed the dead merchant's abode to another sphere. Amadace's role in effecting the merchant's burial proves to be spiritually transformative. Somatic bodies correlate to spiritual states.

Two transformed bodies have influenced interior states within Amadace. The first displayed transformation through extended decomposition and thwarted burial. This body functions as a mirror of Amadace's actions and instilled in him a correction of profligacy. The second transformed form is that of the liminal White Knight who intercedes to correct a fault in Amadace's relation to and perception of commercial goods and divine gifts. Unlike the *Awntyrs*, which leaves the audience with no clear certainty concerning Guinevere's spiritual response to her mother's warning, the romance of *Amadace* provides some indication that Amadace has implemented the White Knight's correction. The romance concludes with Amadace seeking out his past creditors and repaying all his debts. He even seeks out his former steward and attendants to invite them to dwell with him for the rest of their lives. Bodily transformations in one character influence spiritual transformations in other.

Correction in *Amadace* is more intrusive than it is in *Awntyrs*. While in *Awntyrs* the revenant uses every tool in her arsenal to convey her moral warning—her decrepit body, close resemblance to Guinevere, and description of hellish torments—the ghost does not enforce correction on Guinevere's own body through a loss of fortune. The ghost stands as a mirror for Guinevere to consider her own fate if she continues in these sins. In *Amadace* the rotting corpse clearly stands as a mirror to Amadace of the results of his own actions. However, the White Knight directly influences Amadace's fortunes—he gives

Amadace gifts and he takes them away. It is this acquisition and loss, with its deadly consequences, that effects the White Knight's corrective measures. *Amadace* employs the trope of the mighty cast low and the lowly elevated in order to encourage the knight's reform—a trope also implemented in the thirteenth-century romance *Robert of Cisyle.*

Robert of Cisyle

Robert of Cisyle represents somatic transformation through an angel, who assumes and usurps Robert's own likeness to correct him from the sin of pride. By influencing his fame and fortune, the angel instigates Robert's transformation from a proud ruler to a humbled fool by forcing Robert to associate with animals rather than men. Rather than offer Robert a model for him to either adopt or reject, as Guinevere's mother provides in *Awntyrs*, the agent of correction deliberately intervenes in Robert's fortune until it produces in Robert the desired Christian attributes. This divine agent appears in a transformed likeness in order to instigate moral, interior correction within Robert. A somatically transformed character influences spiritual states within another. Extant in ten manuscripts, *Robert of Cisyle* was a popular story in the Middle Ages. Its sources derive from *exempla* and the religious tradition at large, which provide precedents for agents of correction to intervene into the affairs of proud rulers.[384]

Unlike *Awntyrs*, where the ghost of Guinevere's mother does not name Guinevere's sin, *Robert of Cisyle* clearly states the subject of moral fault in the first line of the poem. The poem directly addresses its audience: 'Princes proude… I wol you telle

[384] *Robert of Cisyle* dates to the fourteenth century and is composed in a Southeast Midlands dialect. Its popularity is attested to by ten extant manuscripts including the Vernon MS and Simeon MS, both of which contain *The King of Tars*. It has most recently been edited in *Amis and Amiloun, Robert of Cisyle, and Sir Amadace,* ed. by Edward Foster, pp. 75-93, and all references are to this edition by line number. For critical introduction to the text, see Joan Baker, '*Deposuit potentes*: Apocolyptic Rhetoric in the Middle English *Robert of Sicily*', *Medieval Perspectives,* 12 (1997), 25-45; Andrea Hopkins, *The Sinful Knights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), pp. 179-99; Lillian Herlands Hornstein, 'King Robert of Sicily: Analogues and Origins', *PMLA*, 79 (1964), 13-21. Hornstein notes that the romance draws from folklore, history, Biblical commentary, and *exempla* for its sources ('King Robert', p. 13).

thing' (1-2). This theme of pride is reiterated in the text's description of Robert: 'The kyng [Robert] thoughte, he hedde no peer [….] in his thought he hedde pryde' (25-27). Robert's pride develops from his reputation as peerless conqueror (11-15) and is further inflated as a result of the positions of power held by his brothers: one brother is Pope Urban and the other is the Emperor. The power of the three brothers, effectively ruling Church and State, encompasses the breadth of Christendom. Hearing evensong elicits his claims of invincibility. He listens to a clerk recite the 'Magnificat' in Latin, and when he hears these lines, 'Deposuit potentes de sede| Et exaltavit humiles' (40-41), he orders the clerk to translate them 'in langage of his owne tongue' (26). At the cleric's explanation of the Magnificat, the ability of God to reduce the mighty and uplift the lowly, Robert calls this well-known Christian tenet 'fals' and 'fable' (50) and states that 'No mon lyveth in no londe, |That me may withstonde' (56). The qualifiers of 'no mon' in 'no londe' indicate Robert's restricted vision of temporal authority and his security in temporal power. While no person on earth may compete with Robert's power, temporal authority, as the romance iterates, is subjected to divine rule and can be easily upset by divine intervention.

As if in response to Robert's boast, divine intervention occurs in the form of a supernatural imposter. As Robert snoozes after the end of evensong, a further indication of his lassitude toward spiritual things, 'a kyng ilyk him out gan gon' (62). This new king is in fact 'Godes angel' sent for 'his pruide to felle' (66). This angel's transformation into Robert's very likeness is so convincing that none of his men notice the alteration, so much so that when 'the angel in halle joye made', 'all men of hym weore glade,' (67-68). Not only does the court not miss Robert himself, but they even enjoy the imposter's company. An angel, through transformative abilities, assumes Robert's own likeness and Robert's place of power. By robbing Robert of the temporal power he so trusted in, the angel has come to effect Robert's correction.

To effect correction, the angel employs the guise of being 'not what he seems'. In Christian medieval thought, as demonstrated in Chapters Two and Three, the earth was full of figures who were not what they seemed: devils appeared as angels of light; deceased saints, and even Christ himself, appeared to holy persons in disguise in order to test their merit. Rather than a devil in an angel's likeness, in *Robert*, an angel appears in a human's likeness. Something similar occurs in Capgrave's *Life of St Katherine*: when Katherine disappears for three days in order to be transported to heaven and become the bride of Christ, a queen in Katherine's very likeness is sent to rule in her stead while she is away, and reduces unnecessary political strife (III. 1460-74). An angel transformed into human likeness also appears in the analogues of *Robert*. While there is no known direct source for *Robert*, both Christian and secular texts contain this motif of an angel taking a ruler's form in order to lead him to correction. In the closest analogue, the Old French (early fourteenth century) *Li Dis Dou Magnificat* of Jean de Condé, an angel takes the king's clothes while bathing and usurps his likeness.[385] One of the most well-known versions of the tale comes from the *Gesta Romanorum*—which also provides some of the source material for *Awntyrs*. It tells the story of Emperor Jovinian who takes a dip in a stream; when he surfaces, his clothes and retinue have vanished.[386] Hornstein argues that *Robert* depended on Solomonic legend and biblical ideas in order to articulate the themes expressed in the *Magnificat*. In Talmudic and Midrashic accounts, Solomon too was ejected from his own palace and replaced by an angel in his own likeness.[387] In another version, the demon Ashmodai assumes Solomon's likeness.[388] These analogues demonstrate the prevalence of the motif of employing transformation to effect correction, particularly that

[385] Similarities between the two texts include the 'Magnificat', the failure of the brothers to reocognize him, and the king garbed as a fool. Whereas the angel must reveal the fault to the king in the French source, Robert must discover his flaws for himself. See Hornsetin, 'King Robert', pp. 15-16.
[386] Hornstein, 'King Robert', p. 14. Other sources include Stricker's *Der Nackte König* (early 13th C Middle High German); and Herrand von Wildonie's *Der Nackte Kaiser* (late 13th C, Middle High German). See also Baker, '*Deposuit Potentes*', pp. 28, 38-39; and Loomis*, Mediaeval Romance,* pp. 58-64.
[387] Hornstein, 'King Robert', pp. 17-19.
[388] Baker, '*Deposuit Potentes*', p. 35, who attributes this to the *Babylonian Talmud*.

of an angel taking on the likeness of a king. This tradition roots itself in medieval religious thought and demonstrates the ways divine providence sends liminal agents to effect correction in rulers of temporal power—in short, for somatic transformation to influence moral character.

In order to initiate correction, the angel transforms Robert's body in order to prove the divine power lauded in the *Magnificat:* to change him from a figure of pomp and circumstance to someone lowly. The angel accomplishes this in a number of ways. The first is that no one recognizes Robert as king. When Robert awakes in the church, the sexton believes him to be a thief come to rob the church. Rather than credit Robert's protests that he is king, the sexton throws him out. The porter does not recognize Robert, and Robert's anger with the porter causes him to descend from a kingly figure to a humble fool. Thus incensed, Robert calls the porter names, threatens him with punishments, and smites the porter so 'that blod barst out of mouth and chin' (124). However, Robert gets as good as he gives. The porter smites him back so that blood burst from his nose and mouth, and, in a further skirmish, the porter and his men cast Robert into a puddle. The text mentions that the results of this skirmish alter his physical appearance so that he is not recognizable. It notes, 'Unsemely heo maden his bodi than, | That he nas lyk non other man' (131-132). By influencing Robert's fame and fortune, the angel transforms Robert, now sporting the injuries from a street brawl, into a lowly beggar.

The angel influences Robert's correction by transforming him into a lowly fool. Displeased that Robert has injured his porter, the angel-king states that Robert must 'ubey' or make amends. The first punishment the King prescribes is that of naming Robert as his fool and he orders his appearance be physically altered to reflect this newly conferred state. The King orders that Robert be shorn in order to better resemble a fool ('Thou schal be shoren everichdel, |Lych a foll, a fool to be', 154-55). The barber shaves him as a friar: 'an hondebrede bove either ere | And on his croune made a crois' (172-73)—a

'vileynye' to which Robert furiously objects. In fact, Robert's outrage is so great that he does not consider 'that God Almihti couthe devyse, |Him to bringe to lower stat' (182-184). But this lower state soon appears when the angel-king further orders that Robert must sleep with hounds—a condition that Robert finds so distressing he laments his birth and causes the entire court to ridicule him. The combination of these punishments appears to have altered Robert's appearance: 'For no mon ne mihte him knowe, | He was defygured in a throwe' (191-92). In another method of effecting Robert's correction, the angel-king requires that Robert must only eat from the same dish as hounds—an act of penance similar to the one the pope assigns to Sir Gowther. This punishment is so degrading that Robert nearly dies before, out of necessity of hunger, he eats with the hounds. When no other course of action appears, Robert dines with dogs and finds there great plenty (205-06). The angel influences Robert's transformation into a lowly fool through humiliating punishments that liken Robert to animals.

Through the loss of fame and fortune and through the consignment of the angel-king's punishment, Robert slowly transforms from king to beggar to fool to dog, and now, most humiliating of all, the angel requires Robert to dress in the likeness of an ape:

> Thi counseyler schal ben an ape,
> And o clothyng you worth ischape.
> I schal him clothen as thi brother,
> Of o clothyng—hit is non other;
> He schal beo thin owne feere,
> Sum wit of him thou miht lere. (157-62)

Robert in effect must transform into an ape. This ape will become Robert's close companion, his 'feere'. The term 'feere' in *Amadace* holds specific and intimate connotations. The merchant's widow names her husband as 'my wedutte fere' (135). Amadace and the White Knight call each other 'myn owun true fere (685, 817). The close intimate companionship that describes relations amongst blood brothers and that of husband and wife, now describes Robert's relationship with the court ape. In fact, the

angel intends that the ape shall be 'as thi brother'. Considering that Robert's true brothers are the most important persons in Christendom as emperor and pope, the angel deliberately plays on notions of pride closest to Robert's heart when he places Robert's next of kin as an ape. As the court travels to meet Robert's brothers, the text highlights the foolish appearance of Robert compared to the royalty of the angel's retinue. The angel-king appears in white samite adorned with costly pearls, and his horse and clothes appear to have divine origins. The royal quality of the retinue is so palpable that every squire in the angel's retinue is thought to actually be a king (266). In light of this royal, noble train, Robert stands out in stark contrast.

> And alle ride of riche aray
> Bote Kyng Robert […]
> Alle men on him gone pyke,
> For he rod al other unlyke.
> An ape rod of his clothing,
> In tokne that he was underlyng. (267-72)

The narrative emphasises Robert's isolation compared to the lavish riches of the retinue. The ape dressing in Robert's likeness further underscores this humiliation: Robert is such a fool that an ape appears as his apprentice.

The ape in the Middle Ages, with its resemblance to human form but retention of animal intellect, depicted 'the sin of superbia, the desire to be like God'.[389] In legends of Solomon, one story tells of how Solomon, in his travels, meets ape-men: they were formerly men, but because they rejected the teaching of the Torah, they were transformed. Analogues of the Tower of Babel story also tell how those whose greatest sin was pride (attempting to ascend to heaven) were transformed into apes. Particularly in England, apes were used in courtly settings to entertain and likened to fools. Bernard of Clairvaux discusses the pernicious sin of pride exemplified by 'the ape on the roof, the king of the

[389] The following section draws from Hornstein's work, in 'King Robert', p. 18-19 (p.19).

fools, priding himself on his exalted station'.[390] The conditions dictated by the angel-king cause Robert to associate himself more with animals than humans. Robert transforms from a proud, ignorant king to a fool who must sup with dogs and call an ape his brother.

The romance juxtaposes Robert's transformation into an ape-like fool with the reunion Robert hopes he will have with his human brothers. In his ridiculous appearance, Robert approaches his brothers and pleads that they recognize him and take vengeance upon the imposter-angel who claims his throne. Robert's reliance on temporal authority, and on the bonds of brotherhood, supplies his last vestiges of hope, 'For he hopede, bi eny thing, | his bretheren wolde ha mad him kyng' (297-98). When Robert attempts to claim such noble kinship with the emperor and the pope, 'To cleyme such a bretherhede: | hit was a holde a foles dede' (289-92). Robert's actions exemplify his transformation into a fool—a fool in both appearance and character. His outward appearance finally matches his inward state. Exterior form relates to interior spirit. Neither the emperor nor the pope 'ne kneugh not for heor brother' (287). At their denial of his identity, Robert repeatedly cries 'alas'.[391] The failure of his brothers to enact vengeance on his behalf leaves Robert bereft of any further reliance on temporal authority.

With the removal of the last vestige of his reliance on temporal power, Robert turns to consider his condition: 'thenne he thought on his trespas' (308). Robert's condition causes him to identify himself with Nebuchadnezzar. The story of the king of the Babylonians, stemming from the Old Testament, was a familiar one in the Middle Ages. As a result of Nebuchadnezzar's pride, God inflicted madness on him, which drove him into the wilderness, where he lived in a wild and untameable existence. [392] By the later

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[390] *Patrologia Latina*, 182, 175, as quoted by Hornstein, 'King Robert', p. 19. Also mentioned by Hopkins, *Sinful Knights,* 186-89. See also H. W. Janson, *Apes and Ape Lore in the Middle Ages and Renaissance* (London: The Warburg Institute, University of London, 1952), pp. 13-71.

[391] This 'alas' and 'woe' at times represent sinner's contrition. See the earlier discussion on *Libeaus Desconus* in Chapter One.

[392] For depictions of Nebuchadnezzar in the Middle Ages, see Penelope Doob, *Nebuchadnezzar's Children: Conventions of Madness in Middle English Literature* (London: Yale University Press, 1974); and Corinne Saunders, *The Forest in Medieval Literature* (Cambridge: D. S. Brewer, 2001), pp. 10-13. Robert's account of

Middle Ages, Nebuchadnezzar modelled, in the words of James Montgomery, 'what kings, when corrected, may become'.[393] Robert considers himself as like Nebuchadnezzar: 'Nou am I in such caas' (333). This affinity causes Robert to name his sins. He recalls his pride as peerless conqueror, and calls this the same sin as that of 'angels that gonne from joye glyde' (342). Awareness of his sin causes Robert to acknowledge God's mastery ('God binom heore maystrie') and to consider his lowly status as a place where 'now am I well owe ipult, | And that is right that I so be' (346-47). Robert places Nebuchadnezzar's suffering as 'come […] bi Godes gras!' (330), which 'does not refer to God's restoration and forgiveness of Nebuchadnezzar, but to the afflictions which ultimately made him conscious of the truth and caused him to ask forgiveness.'[394] Robert's recognition of suffering as 'Gods gras' influences a transformation in his conception of authority, which shifts from temporal to divine. Robert, in his repentance, moves toward being a fool who has gained insight into his foolish state. This idea of the wise fool, or the fool who has gained wisdom, appears memorably in Shakespeare's depiction of King Lear and his fool. Robert's insight into his condition is so perceptive and profound, that he renames himself. Lear must grow foolish before he grows wise. Similarly, Robert has transformed into a fool, and names himself, not a fool of the court, but a spiritual fool: 'Lord, on Thi fool Thow have pité' (348).

Robert's penance echoes that recorded in prayer books and is evidenced in his no longer calling himself king, but naming himself a spiritual fool. Robert's prayer of repentance, embracing his foolish state, relies heavily on pietistic literature and Church doctrine. Seven times Robert repeats, 'Lord, on Thi fool Thou have pité' (348, 352, 356,

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Nebuchadnezzar draws partly from the biblical book of Daniel and from the apocryphal Book of Judith; and mention of Nebuchadnezzar's moral failure also appears in *Cleanness* and Gower's *Confessio Amantis* (Hopkins, *Sinful Knights*, p. 189-90).

[393] James A. Montgomery, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Daniel* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1927), p. 75.

[394] Hopkins, *Sinful Knights,* p. 191.

360, 364, 368, 372). The repetition of this phrase not only recalls the liturgical response of 'Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer', but also the number seven, the number of God, whole and complete, suggests a whole, complete, and perfect state of repentance for Robert's past sins of pride.[395] A further testimonial to Robert's repentance occurs after Robert has expressed his prayer of contrition. In this state, Robert remains five weeks with the angel-king and his two brothers without once attempting to draw attention to the fact that he is truly their kin. Robert's conditioned humbled response testifies to the true nature of his transformed character.

The romance concludes with an emphasis on Robert's spiritual transformation. Robert articulates his transformation into a spiritual fool to the angel. When the angel asks, 'Fool, art thow kyng?' (387), Robert denies this and names himself a fool. Because Robert's pride has been corrected, the angel returns to Robert his temporal authority. The angels tells Robert that 'a fool thou weore to Hevene kyng' (401) and for these past sins he is now forgiven. The romance concludes with an emphasis on final things and on heavenly glory. The angel restores Robert to kingship: 'I am an angel, thou art kyng!' (414). In one further act of transformation, the angel disappears in the twinkling of an eye. While the effects of his physical transformation, from king to fool, are erased and he is restored to his former glory, the effects of his spiritual transformation remain. Yet the narrative concludes with Robert's final transformation: his death. The angel returns and warns Robert of his imminent death, and he dies within two years of his return as king. Olsen reminds us that, like the angel, Robert is merely returning to heavenly glory, 'from which we were exiled by Adam's Fall'.[396] Robert's spiritual correction and transformation appear to inform his final somatic transformation—his death. His spiritual transformation has

[395] While this is my own conclusion, the echo to devotional literature has also been noted by Mehl, p. 125 and Hopkins, *Sinful Knights*, p. 192.
[396] Alexandra Hennessey Olsen, 'The Return of the King: A Reconsideration of *Robert of Sicily', Folklore,* 93 (1982), 216-219 (p. 218).

been so great that his death, with the angelic warning, evokes the death of saints.[397] The final somatic transformation from life to death initiates his spiritual transformation into the realms of glory.

Robert of Cisyle plays upon the trope of a figure who is not what he seems. However, the emphasis is not on the transformed body or the physical appearance of the angel, but on the strange situation in which the angel's identical likeness places Robert. The suffering the angel inflicts functions to reveal to Robert his sin. The supernatural intervenes and catalyses a miscarriage in Robert's unblighted fortunes. This removes him from his position of power and through punishments prescribed by the imposter-angel, transforms his physical appearance into a fool. Moreover, Robert's appearance as fool occurs through forced affinities to hounds and apes. This physical transformation uses temporal, not supernatural means, to transform Robert's body. As Hornstein points out, 'the protagonist in this tale does not actually shift his shape. He is "transformed" as only psychological humiliation and physical misery can alter the physique.'[398] These physical changes ultimately inspire his interior reform. Robert's punishments embody the *Magnificat,* the proud felled and the lowly exalted. Unlike *Awntyrs,* the supernatural agent has more power to influence the circumstances of correction, so much so that Robert's correction is marked by physical, but natural, transformation, and these somatic changes influence an inner transformation of character. *Robert of Cisyle* illustrates important shifts in somatic to spiritual transformations. The angel's transformed body inspires Robert's interior correction; however, Robert's interior correction is inspired by the suffering endured in his transformed corporeal state (from king to fool). The body's suffering can effect spiritual transformation.

[397] Once again, this is my own deduction, but a similar point has been made by Hopkins, *Sinful Knights,* p. 193 and Olsen, 'Return of the King', p. 218.
[398] Hornstein, 'King Robert', p. 17.

Conclusion

Liminal agents appear in transformed bodies to influence moral correction of figures of authority. These liminal agents are sent by divine Providence and the interior corrections they effect are spiritual. Guinevere's mother persuades against the vice of adultery. The White Knight corrects Amadace's perception of money. The angel rids Robert of his pride. These agents appear in transformed, liminal bodies. The transformation of death has etched the sin she committed in this life on the body of Guinevere's mother. *Amadace* treats transformation through a graphic depiction of a rotting corpse, as well as a revenant, who, unlike Guinevere's mother, appears to have been spiritually perfected. The angel in *Robert of Cisyle* assumes Robert's human likeness, and the description of his angelic body are similar to descriptions of the White Knight. These romances all portray human embodiments of transformation.

These transformed bodies inspire spiritual correction. The revenant of Guinevere's mother influences correction through physically displaying on her macabre body the fate that awaits Guinevere if she does not repent. However, the text makes no mention of Guinevere's repentance. The bodies of the dead merchant and, his spiritual counterpart, the revenant White Knight correct Amadace's perceptions of wealth. The angel's transformation into Robert of Cisyle thwarts Robert's trust in temporal power and instigates his conversion into a spiritual fool. The agents intervene to correct individuals by influencing their fortunes, and not the health of the physical body. Guinevere must merely contemplate her mother's macabre form. Amadace suffers through the fluctuations of loss and regaining of wealth. Robert's suffering concerns deprivations of power and punishment that transforms his body into a fool. This relationship between somatic transformation and spiritual transformation occurs across two bodies: one body displays physical transformation while the other body undergoes interior transformation. Physical states in one person influence spiritual states in another.

These romances display two complex relationships to transformation. The first appears in a transformation across two individuals: the transformed body of one person reveals or influences the transformed interior character of another. This relationship between transformations of body and spirit has, thus far, moved between two persons. Yet these romances show a second relationship between external and internal transformation: that somatic transformation can influence and evidence spiritual states. A change in the physical body can affect an individual's own moral character. Guinevere's mother displays this relationship. The spiritual and physical transformation encountered at death reflect her spiritual deficiencies. Her psychosomatic form now displays these spiritual sins. Moreover, the suffering she endures in her body will transform and perfect her spiritual soul. The extent to which these protagonists physically suffer appears to correspond to their internal correction. Guinevere suffers little and demonstrates little awareness of her sin; Amadace suffers through the loss and gain of wealth, and shows awareness of his sins in his confession. Robert's physical transformation into the likeness of a fool appears as the most extreme instance of repentance. The degree of bodily suffering directly correlates to the degree of moral improvement.

Transformations of the body influence and evidence transformations of the spirit. *Amadace* also represents the relation between the physical body and spiritual state. The dead merchant's corpse, unburied, denies rest to his soul. Amadace, by putting to rest the merchant's physical body, also confers rest on his soul. This rest is evidenced in the White Knight's spiritually transformed body, sent as a divine agent. Moreover, Amadace, through the physical transformations conferred by penury and wealth, obtains a correct view of divine and temporal gifts. His physical being influences his interior state. Robert's physical transformations into an ape influence his spiritual correction as God's fool. This physical shift embodies Robert's spiritual state. In these ways, these romances

demonstrate the link between spiritual status and physical body, and how transformation of the body evidences and transforms an individual's spiritual state.

Awntyrs, Amadace, and *Robert*—all three of these romances strongly draw from the *exemplum* tradition. Schmitt writes that the purpose of *exempla* was the individual salvation of its audience and the necessary horizon

> […] of the *exempla* in particular was therefore death, the individual in judgement of the sinner at the moment of death, the joys or tribulations of the hereafter, and at the end of time, the Last Judgement and the resurrection of the dead.[399]

Because of this emphasis on death, *exempla* employed ghosts to convey their messages. By contrast to *miracula*, ghosts were abundant in *exempla* and had their place in *exempla* to 'prepare […] Christians to die well.'[400] The liminal agents in this chapter function in a similar way to those in *exempla*. Guinevere's mother displays the spiritual effects of death on her body and attests to the suffering of purgatory. *Amadace* presents the natural transformation of a decaying body through graphic, sensual detail. *Robert of Cisyle* shows that even a penitential sinner may die the death of a saint. All three romances demonstrate the transformative effects of death, both spiritual and physical, and ultimately encourage their audiences to consider their own mortality and the spiritual consequences their death may entail.

Finally, these romances, deeply concerned with religious ideology, show surprising liberality in its implementation. The *Awntyrs* intends to shocks its audience when it describes in great detail how a baptised Christian may suffer hellfire. Additionally, while Robert and Amadace repent of their sins, like the Green Knight, neither follow medieval practices of confession, penance, and absolution. Amadace confesses in the isolation of the woods, while Robert confesses and repents by invoking the aid of Christ and Mary. Church rules on penance required a priest to hear penance and to absolve sin

[399] Schmitt, p. 125.
[400] Ibid., p. 125.

and prescribe penance.[401] Yet despite their failure to follow the Church's recommendations for correct penitential conduct, divine power intervenes forcibly to relay to each of them that their sins have indeed been forgiven. *Robert of Cisyle* displays monstrous sins of pride, yet also demonstrates that the most penitential sinner may be graced with a saint-like death. All of these romances engage with fundamentally theological ideas, yet none of them employ these in accord with doctrinal policies. They rewrite religious ideas in surprising and complex manners.

[401] The Fourth Lateran Council of the 1215 instituted that a Christian must confess to a priest once a year, and supported widespread cultural practices of the priest's role in confession, penance, and absolution.

Chapter Five: Consolidated Transformations: One Body and One Spirit

Introduction

Heretofore agents of transformation have revealed identity, interior character, and corrected flaws within the protagonist. However, the bodies of these somatically-transformed agents have steadily evolved toward natural human forms. Corporeal transformations have evolved from werewolves to extreme variations of the human form (Green Knight, loathly lady) to those who appear in the likeness of humans (Melusine, Robert's angel) to the human body and transformative effects of death (Amadace's merchant, Guinevere's mother). As bodily transformations have evolved toward a human form, interior, spiritual revelations and transformations have consistently increased in strength. Interior states have evolved from a revelation of identity to a revelation of character flaws—both chivalric and spiritual—to inspiring correction. The attention to interior transformation has steadily grown.

The relationship between somatic transformations and interior states demonstrates a negative correlation. Extreme states of somatic transformation in one person yield only a modicum of the other individual's interior status. While Alphonse displays the extremity of somatic transformation as a werewolf, he does not reveal William's spiritual sins—merely his name and parentage. Conversely, the extreme spiritual transformation of one person reduces the extremity of the other's somatically transformed form. Robert's major spiritual transformation into a fool—from pride to repentance to humility—corresponds to a lack of emphasis on the angel's somatic transformation into Robert's likeness. The relationship between transformed somatic bodies negatively correlates to spiritual, interior transformation.

Thus far, somatic and spiritual transformations have occurred across two bodies. In animal transformations these occurred between The Lady of Sinadoun and Libeaus, werewolf and William, the swan-brother and Enyas. In the chapters on testing, the bodies of the Green Knight, a Turke, a Carle, and even loathly ladies correlate to Gawain's character flaws. These transformations occur between Melusine and Raymond, Guinevere and her mother, Amadace and the dead merchant/White Knight, and Robert and the angel. The process of physical to spiritual transformation thus far has been carried out between two individuals. Those with transformed bodies confer identity or correction on another.

However, transformations, both physical and spiritual, shift to become localized in one body. Over the course of these chapters, the somatic form of one agent has steadily decreased in extremity—from werewolves (unrealistic, fantastic) to decaying corpses (mundane, universal). This external agent of corporeal transformation, inspiring and revealing interior transformation within the protagonist, move toward a human form. The external agent, somatically transformed, becomes redundant as romances embrace transformations located within the same body and same spirit. Transformation no longer need occur across two bodies, with the somatic agent of one body informing the interior states of another. Transformation of one body now correlates to transformation of the same soul. Robert's physical transformation into a fool and ape corresponds to his spiritual transformation into God's fool. Somatic and spiritual states are consolidated within the same being. The following chapter turns now to discuss how transformations of an individual's body reveal and display his or her interior, spiritual states.

Consolidated Bodies: Transformations of Body and Spirit

As transformations are consolidated in one body, the emphasis on spiritual states increases. Transformation of the body reveals the individual's interior state and displays his or her spiritual form. Divine supernatural power can transform a person's physical body to illustrate his or her spiritual state. One of the ways this occurs is through supernatural power (both faery and divine) entering into romance narratives to blind the spiritual offender. An example of this occurs in the fourteenth-century Middle English redaction of Marie de France's *Lanval*, *Sir Launfal.*[402] In this romance, Launfal attracts the affections of a faery paramour but must not reveal her existence. In court, Launfal rebuffs Guinevere's sexual advances. In return she accuses him of homosexual tendencies and perjures herself in front of the court by falsely accusing him of sexual misconduct with her. When Launfal, to exonerate himself, states he has a beautiful paramour, Guinevere replies that if his statement proves true, 'Put out my eeyn gray!' (810). Whilst the impression of the court is that Guinevere's claims are false (They 'knewe the maners of the Quene', 788), her position of power ensures Launfal's trial. At the eleventh hour of the final day, Tryamour arrives and condemns the entire court for their unjust conduct. Moreover, as no one of temporal power can punish Guinevere, Tryamour, whose supernatural power supersedes temporal authority, enforces a type of justice when Tryamour approaches Guinevere and 'blew on her swych a breth | That never eft myght sche se', 1007-08). Guinevere's blindness to Launfal's statement of truth, in addition to her blindness to justice, causes Tryamour to symbolically write Guinevere's deteriorated moral state on her somatic form. Guinevere's blindness physically represents sins of injustice.

[402] *Sir Launfal,* in *The Middle English Breton Lays*, ed. by Laskaya and Salisbury, pp. 201-62.

Transformations of blindness appear in romance in cases of pagan unbelief. These also transform the physical body to reveal interior qualities. In *The Sege of Melayne* (*ca.* 1400), when Roland is captured by the Saracens, and as they desecrate the cross, the cross miraculously emits supernatural rays of light.[403] These rays blind all the Saracens present and set Roland free from prison. Their rejection of Christianity, divine truth, and blind spiritual status is written on their physical form. A similar type of transformation occurs in *Chevalere Assigne*. The child Enyas fights the Queen-mother's defender, Malkedras, who insults the cross on Enyas's shield. At this insult, fire emits out of the shield and blinds Malkedras—enabling the child to become victorious. Malkedras's spiritual rejection is written on his body. Moreover, a similar type of transformation of blindness occurs in *Ferumbras*. These narratives write the infidel's spiritual blindness, their rejection of Christian tenets, on their physical form. Their physical blindness symbolises their spiritual states.

As we have seen, romance employs physical transformation of the body in order to display spiritual states. Blindness of the corporeal body displays an interior condition of blindness to justice as well as blindness to divine truth. However, blindness was not the only signifier of a decrepit interior. Disease and illness could also signify moral failures. For example *Le Bone Florence of Rome* (late fourteenth century) details the peregrinations of a Constance-figure who suffers repeatedly at the hands of lecherous and deceitful men.[404] Divine favour protects Florence and also inflicts on the bodies of these offenders grotesque diseases. Their physical form evidences their sins. This follows contemporary medieval understandings of illness and disease as potentially caused by a person's spiritual sins.[405] The romance of *Titus and Vespasian* (*ca.* 1375-1400) displays how the body can ultimately reveal the soul's interior status. Before his suicide, Pilate refuses to repent: his

[403] *Sege of Melayne* in *Six Romances*, ed. by Mills, pp. 1-45.
[404] *Le Bone Florence of Rome,* ed. by C. F. Heffernan (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976).
[405] Wilson, *Magical Universe,* p. 313-14.

dead body poisons both water and land until it is miraculously enclosed in a rock. Pilate's unrepentant spiritual state appears on his noxious cadaver.[406] All of these examples demonstrate how somatic transformation can reflect spiritual form.

Furthermore, transformation of the body can occur in order to correct an individual. Divine intervention can physically transform the body, from health into sickness, in order to atone for sin. One of the most well-known examples of this occurs in *Amis and Amiloun*—an early fourteenth-century, Middle English redaction of a hagiographic text.[407] Amiloun, because he is identical to his best friend, Amis, agrees to stand in Amis' place in a trial-by-combat. However, before he undertakes his trial, a heavenly voice warns him that if he proceeds to thwart justice, his own body will suffer for the consequences: God will inflict leprosy on him. Notwithstanding, Amiloun defeats the steward in the trial-by-combat, and as a result, suffers from such extreme leprosy that he is physically transformed. His wife evicts him from their home and he is further changed from a knight into a beggar. Amiloun is reunited with Amis through their matching golden goblets, and an angel informs Amis that he can cure his friend by baptising Amiloun in the blood of his slaughtered children. The sins of Amiloun are washed from his body through the sacrifice of Amis' innocent children and he is transformed back into full health. While divine benevolence has the kindness to return life to Amis' children, Amiloun endures the punishments of divine providence on his body in his transformed, leprous state, in order to atone for his spiritual sins of disobeying divine commands. Amiloun's spiritual disobedience causes him to suffer penance on his physical body. Romances then reveal interior status through a transformation of physical

[406] *Titus and Vespasian: or The Destruction of Jerusalem in Rhymed Couplets*, ed. by J. A. Herbert (London: Roxburghe Club, 1905).
[407] *Amis and Amiloun* has been edited by Edward Foster, in *Amis and Amiloun*, *Robert of Cisyle, and Sir Amadace*, ed. by Foster, pp. 1-74.

form. Moreover, an alteration to the somatic form can influence and atone for an individual's spiritual state.

Spiritual Transformations Etched on the Body

While transformation to a somatic form can reveal or influence an individual's spiritual state, the reverse is also true: a transformed spirit can inspire physical alteration. The remainder of this chapter will explore, in greater detail, how a transformed spirit can cause somatic transformations. This pattern occurs in three romances: *The King of Tars, St Erkenwald,* and *Amoryus and Cleopes.* All three of these romances, due to their spiritual emphasis, are considered homiletic or hagiographic romances, and this is for good reason: each details an individual's spiritual salvation and writes this spiritual transformation on the individual's body. In these romances, spiritual alteration inspires somatic change. *The King of Tars* details, through spiritual transformation, how the somatic lump of flesh turns into a healthy baby boy. Moreover, it evidences the Sultan's conversion from Saracen to Christian on his very skin. *St Erkenwald* displays the preserved body of a heathen judge and how this pagan is given salvation—also evidenced on his corporeal body. Finally, in *Amoryus and Cleopes* conversion in the afterlife brings about the resurrection of two suicides. These romances testify to the animating power of Christian belief and articulate new life that is conferred in the act of salvation, visible on the protagonists' physical bodies. Spiritual transformations inspire change to somatic forms.

The King of Tars

The Kings of Tars explores causal aspects that inform the need for transformation, emphasizing that the greatest transformative miracle is salvation as expressed through baptism and evidenced in powerful, somatic ways. The need for physical transformation arises in *The King of Tars* when the princess gives birth to a lump of flesh rather than a

human child. This child appears as the result of a Christian- Saracen union—and the text depicts this union through hagiographic precedents. A Saracen sultan, hearing of the princess's reputation in beauty, lays siege to her father's kingdom and nearly annihilates his people before the princess, in order to save them, begs 'lete me be þe soudans wiiif' (223).[408] The contraction of her marriage to a Saracen writes this princess as a Constance figure.[409] Constance too was contracted in union to a Saracen, but the condition of her marriage was his conversion—a motif that also appears in hagiographies such as *Lives of Ursula and the 11,000 Virgins*. *The King of Tars,* so resonant of the Constance-legends, frustrates any motif-expectations when the princess does not demand her husband's conversion. Geraldine Heng remarks that in a standard hagiography, the princess would of course be expected to die rather than to convert.[410] Moreover, unlike Constance, the princess is forced to convert to the Saracen religion. While the text carefully observes that although she recited the Saracen's tenants of belief 'openliche with hir mouthe', but 'Jhesu forgat sche nought' (502-03), this conversion, to all intents and purposes, transform her into a Saracen.[411] Furthermore, the threat of rape, featured in hagiographies such as Osbern Bokenham's depictions of Margaret, Agnes, Ursula and Dorothy, is actually realised in the consummation of her marriage to the Saracen.[412] *The King of Tars,* in order to articulate the marriage between the Sultan and princes, draws on hagiographic source material, but frustrates these motif expectations.

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[408] A fourteenth-century romance ed. by Judith Perryman, *The King of Tars, ed. from the Auchinleck MS, Advocates 19.2.1* (Heidelberg: Carl Winter, 1980). All references are to this edition by line number. This has also recently been edited by John H. Chandler, *The King of Tars,* TEAMS (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Publications, 2015).

[409] Chaucer's *Man of Law's Tale* in *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. Larry Benson, pp. 89-104. See also Linda Hornstein, 'Trivet's Constance and *The King of Tars', Speculum,* 16 (1941), 404-14.

[410] *Empire of Magic: Medieval Romance and the Politics of Cultural Fantasy* (New (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), p. 229.

[411] Siobhain Calkin, *Saracens and the Making of English Identity: the Auchinleck Manuscript* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 97-132 (p. 111).

[412] Osbern Bokenham, *Legendys of Hooly Wummen*. ed. by Mary S. Serjeantson, EETS O.S. 206 (London: Oxford University Press, repr. 1971). For further discussion on female saints and rape, see Corinne Saunders, *Rape and Ravishment*, pp. 120-51.

Physical and spiritual union with a Saracen entails physical and spiritual consequences. The princess of Tars gives birth to a formless mass:

> & when þe child was ybore
> Wel sori wimen were þerfore,
> For lim no hadde it non.
> Bot as a rond of flesche yschore
> In chaumber it lay hem beifore
> Wiþouten blod & bon.
> For sorwe þe leuedi wald dye
> For it hadde noiþer nose no eye,
> Bot lay ded as þe ston. (577-85)

The child bears no resemblance to humanity, having 'noiþer lim, no liif' (749), lacking both the likeness of man ('lim') and spiritual animation ('liif'). Christian might is totally humiliated: their progeny is not even human. It is just 'a rond of flesche' (580). The MED describes 'rond' ('rounde') as 'a spherical body or form; a globular lump'. The text of *The King of Tars* refers to the child before its transformation as 'þe flesche' (i.e. 607, 639, 662, 752, 772), which the MED defines as 'the flesh of the human body; esp., the muscular, gristly, and glandular portions (as opposed to blood vessels, bones, fat, hair, ligaments, nerves, skin, etc.)'. The text describes its physical condition by citing features it does not possess: blood, bones, nose, and eyes (578-588). The couple desire that it attain 'liif & limes', and that it be 'fourmed after a man' (692-93). The lump of flesh is simply that–a globular lump with no distinguishing signs of humanity.

Descriptions of a lump of flesh occur in medieval and modern medical writings on obstetrics and gynaecology. *De Secretis Mulierum* (late 13th/ early 14th C) describes a lump of flesh forming from an excess of male or female seed that falls outside the womb

> near the umbilicus and grows into **a large mass of flesh**, so that their abdomen begins to swell and they believe mistakenly that they are pregnant. This type of **tumor,** called by doctors **the mole of the womb**, can be cured only by medical regimen.[413] [emphasis mine]

[413] *De Secretis Mulierum Women's Secrets: A Translation of Pseudo-Albertus Magnus' De Secretis Mulierum,* ed. and trans. by Helen Rodnite Lemay *(*Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), pp. 67-68. This text dates to the thirteenth-century. On the moles of the womb, see also Monica H. Green, *Making Women's Medicine Masculine* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 314; and Steven Connor, *The Book of Skin* (London: Reaktion Books, 2004) p. 108.

The term 'mole' used by the pseudo-Albertus derives from the Latin 'mola' describing a 'mass or lump of flesh'. According to the OED, the first appearance of the world 'mola' in English is in John Trevisa's 1398 English translation of Bartholomaeus Anglicus' *De Proprietatibus Rerum.*[414] He writes: 'Balsamum..bryngeþ a deede childe out of þe wombe and þe mola out of þe moodir and out of þe wombe.'[415] The 'mola' comes from the womb of the mother, resulting in a 'deed childe', echoing *The King of Tars'* description: 'Bot lay ded as þe ston' (585). Another early English usage of the word 'mole' appears in the *ca.* 1425 translation of Guy de Chauliac's *Grande Chirurgie,* which offers this definition: 'The mole is a gobat of flesche gendred in þe moder.'[416] The MED again defines 'gobat' as 'a lump, a mass' and the word 'flesche' is also repeated in this account. The words and condition that describe a 'mole' in medical discourse also describes the lump of flesh in *The King of Tars.*

Further to medieval gynaecological accounts, modern science confirms that the *mola matricis,* or molar pregnancy, is a congenital medical condition.[417] Molar pregnancy, also known as a hydatidiform mole, occurs when there is an excess or deficiency of genetic material in the embryo; the embryo does not develop; and the trophoblastic cells of the placenta proliferate rapidly into a large mass of tissue. At forty weeks, the woman undergoes labour, yet no child has formed. The 'mole' is essentially an overgrown placenta, a mass of tissue, a miscarriage.[418] The medical description of the mole reveals that the pregnancy lacks the genetic material for the embryo to be compatible with life.

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[414] OED, mole, n[4]. The following references draw from this source.
[415] Quoted from the OED, mole, n[4]. See *On the Properties of Things: John Trevisa's Translation of Bartholomæus Anglicus De Proprietatibus Rerum*, ed. by M. C. Seymour and others (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975), I, pp. 265-66, 282-83.
[416] *The Cyrurgie of Guy of Chauliac,* trans. by Margaret Sinclair Ogden, EETS O.S. 265 (London: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 531, l. 29.
[417] Many thanks to Professor I. K. Temple for the suggesting several medical possibilities regarding the birth in *The King of Tars*, in addition to carefully proof-reading this section to ensure scientific accuracy.
[418] Tadashi Kajii and Koso Ohama, 'Androgenetic origin of hydatidiform mole', *Nature,* 268 (1977), 633-34; and Hayward et al., 'Genetic and Epigenetic Analysis of Recurrent Hydatidiform Mole', *Human Genetic Variation Society*, 1062 (2009), 629-39.

In modern medicine these are treated as miscarriages, echoing the medieval descriptions of the 'deede child' that 'lay dead as the stone'.[419] The scientific support for the lump of flesh evidences genuine fears and wish-fulfilment surrounding conception and pregnancy.

The unnatural form of the child reflects fears of miscegenation and seed transmission. In classical dialogues, unnatural births were identified as *monstrum* and interpreted as warnings, monster deriving from *monere*, to warn, represented as *contra naturam* or against nature.[420] In the Middle Ages, religious significance was attached to these signs. Isidore of Seville defines portents as things that seem to have been born *contra naturam*, divinely caused, 'since God now and then wishes to tell of coming events through some fault or other in newborn creatures'.[421] Friedman argues that this is caused by an excess or defect of the materials of 'fetation'. In other words, monsters are formed through seed transmission.

Discourses on seed transmission sought to explain male and female roles in reproduction, often in terms of the four humours and balance, and the nature and existence of female seed. Inheriting ideologies from ancient philosophers, medieval debates often structured their arguments around the views of Aristotle and Galen, who differed on the role of female seed.[422] According to medieval interpretations of Aristotle, women's seed played a non-formative role in the nature of the embryo, while for Galen both male and female seed contributed to the child's formation. While few medieval authors tend to support either side unequivocally, and often disagree on definitions of 'female sperm', authors such as Albertus Magnus, Taddeo Alderotti, and Giles of Rome

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[419] The lump of flesh as a hydatidiform mole is also suggested by Katie L. Walter 'The Form of the Formless: Medieval Taxonomies of Skin, Flesh, and the Human' in *Reading Skin in Medieval Literature and Culture*, ed. Katie L. Walter (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). Walter discusses linguistic evidence of the *mola matricis* with little reference to the medical connotations; however, with the help of Professor Temple, I independently came to this conclusion.

[420] The following draws from Friedman, pp. 111-115 (p. 111).

[421] *Etymologies,* XI. 4, as quoted by Friedman, p. 112.

[422] This section follows Joan Cadden in *Meanings of Sex Difference in the Middle Ages: Medicine, Science, Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 13-39, 116-130.

promote the Aristotelian view that women do not produce sperm, that is formative seed; on the other hand, Jacopo of Forlì and Hildegard van Bingen sided with the Galenic model of both parents contributing formative seed. Medical theories in the *Trotula* promote an egalitarian view that either parent could be at fault, due to a condition of the womb or a defect in seed.[423] Medieval works, such as Isidore of Seville's *Libri Etymologiarum*, attribute the cause of monstrous births to both the male and the female through an excess or deficiency of seed.[424] Scholarly interpretation faults both the mother or father, attributing the lump of flesh to the princess's religious hypocrisy, the 'wholesale intermingling of Christian and Saracen seed', a sign of the Sultan's degenerative seed, or a combination of all three.[425]

While the lump of flesh signifies faults in seed transmission, it also evidences the parent's problematic spiritual union. While medical discourses attributed abnormal births to physical causes, this did not lessen medieval tendencies to seek spiritual ones. For the Clerk of Enghien, the sins of the parents are visited on the flesh of their progeny. Regarding bearded women, he writes, 'but I don't know if by sin they were first thus conceived' (929-36), and he states that Thomas of Cantimpré's Onocentaurs derive from adultery (32-43).[426] The lump of flesh directly confronts religious practices, Saracen-

[423] *The Trotula: An English Translation of the Medieval compendium of Women's Medicine*, ed. and trans. by Monica H. Green. (Philadelphia: University of Pensylvania Press, 2001), p. 85

[424] The genetic formation of the hydatidiform mole even supports these theories, with an excess of seed correlating to the excess of paternal DNA found in the partial mole, or the lack of formative contribution on behalf of the female represented in the ovum with no genetic material found in the full-mole. Thus it could be argued that modern genetics supports medieval concepts of seed transmission.

[425] For fault of female, see Perryman, p. 56; for miscegenation, see Calkin, *Saracens and [...] English Identity*, p. 112-22; for male seed, see Jane Gilbert, 'Putting the Pulp into Fiction: the Lump-child and its Parents in *The King of Tars',* in *Pulp Fictions*, ed. by Nicola MacDonald, pp. 103-23. Geraldine Heng is more speculative and questions all three, in *Empire of Magic*, p. 228. See also Siobhain Calkin, 'Marking Religion on the Body: Saracens, Categorization, and *The King of Tars', Journal of English and Germanic Philology,* 104 (2005), 219-38; and Jane Gilbert, 'Unnatural Mothers and Monstrous Children in *The King of Tars* and *Sir Gowther',* in *Medieval Women: Texts and Contexts in Late Medieval Britain: Essays for Felicity Riddy,* ed. by Jocelyn wogan-Browne and others (Turnhout: Brepols, 2000), pp. 329-44

[426] *De Monstruosis Hominibus* (929-36), quoted from Friedman, pp. 129-30. For a further discussion, see Friedman, pp. 122-30.

Christian union, and parental sin. The inherent disunity in the parent's spiritual states is proven in the production of their union.

Evidence of miscegenation between a Christian and Saracen on the form of the offspring appears elsewhere in medieval literature. Feirefis, the half-brother of Wolfram Von Eschenbach's Parzival, and son of Moorish Queen Belacane and Christian father Gahmuret, is born spotted like a magpie.[427] However, despite this abnormality of his skin, the text does not discriminate against his origins, but rather writes him as a paragon of Christian virtue: he receives Christian baptism and succeeds in the quest to glimpse the Holy Grail. Moreover, the abnormal union of Christian and Saracen offspring appears in eight separate chronicles, the source material for *The King of Tars,* which feature a princess of Tars married to a Saracen general, who gives birth to a physically deformed child.[428] Five descriptions portray the child as fully covered in hair (Anglo-Latin). Four accounts depict the child as only half-hairy (German, Germano-Latin). Two describe him as half-black and half-white (Franco-Latin). In one he is a hybrid between animal and human (Hispano-Latin). Finally, two represent the child as a lump of flesh (Italian, Anglo-Latin). These accounts of the child's form are diverse but medieval bestiaries supply a causal link between their variation: Bear-cubs are said to be born as small lumps of eyeless white flesh which their mothers gradually shape by licking and animate by breathing life into them.[429] The bear cub's evolution from white lump of flesh to shaggy black beast

[427] Linda Hornstein, 'A Folklore Theme in *The King of Tars*', *Philological Quarterly*, 20 (1941), 82-87 (pp. 85-86); *Parzival and Titurel*, ed. by Karl Simrock, I. 1695-1702.

[428] Linda Hornstein, 'New Analogues of *The King of Tars', Modern Language Review,* 36 (1941), 432-42, and 'The Historical Background of *The King of Tars', Speculum,* 16 (1941), 404-14. The following section draws on the chronicle sources named by Hornstein in 'New Analogues', pp 432-42. Chronicle accounts of a hairy child appear in *Flores Historiarum*, Rishanger's *Chronica et Annales*, and *Histoirca Anglicana.* This is a genetic condition called hypertrichosis universalis congenita, and while half-hairy is called giant pigmented hairy naevus. Chronicles that include the half-hairy child are *Annales Sancti Rudberti Salisburgenses* and Ottokar's *Österreichische Reimchronik*. The chronciles that describe the child as half-black and half-white include Gilles Le Muisit's *Chronique et Annales* and in the *Chronicon Muevini*. The child as a hybrid between human and beast is recorded in a letter to Jayme II of Aragon. The child as a lump of flesh, Hornstien names, can be found in Giovanni Villani's *Istorie Fiorentine* and the *Chronicon de Lanercost*.

[429] See Isidore of Seville, *Etymologies,* XII. 2. 22; and Florence McCulloch, *Mediaeval Latin and French Bestiaries* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1962), p. 94

embraces varying aspects of the children described in these chronicle. All of these accounts demonstrate the offspring of a Christian-Saracen union as evidence of spiritual disparity. The spiritual union of a Christian and Saracen is written on the somatic form of their offspring. Spiritual conditions inspire somatic forms.

The lump of flesh requires both physical and spiritual formation. The condition of a lump of flesh, as described in *The King of Tars*, bears the least likeness to human form, its development primal, non-cognitive, and under-developed. The text describes that it lacked 'liif and lim' (749). Limb corresponds to the outward signs of humanity, while 'liif' refers to spiritual animation. Both of these recall Augustine's qualifiers of humanity: likeness of Adam and rationality. The child, born *contra naturam*, possesses neither of these qualifiers and signifies a need for physical and spiritual formation. The inference is that the physical and spiritual misconduct of the parents influences their child's spiritual and physical state. In *The King of Tars*, the repetition of pleas for the child to develop 'liif and lim' are not idle catchphrases, but a recognition of the components necessary for animation it has never possessed. Roger Dalrymple persuasively argues these pious formulae function beyond 'stock line-fillers for metrical ease' but 'encode a rich and resonant fund of devotional imagery' and provokes 'a strong affective charge'.[430] This miracle requires manipulation of the essence of humanity—an imposition of human form and spiritual life.

Both the Sultan and the princess attribute their child's physical form to a spiritual cause—and as such seek a spiritual remedy. The Sultan attributes the child's deformity to his wife's religious beliefs: he accuses her of spiritual miscegenation—'alle þurth þi false bileue' (594). The princess states that both parents contributed toward its formation and blames the Sultan's faith ('þe child was ȝeten bitven ous to; For þi bileue it farþ so' 604-

[430] *Language and Piety,* as quoted from the cover page.

605). They contract an agreement to allow either of their mutual faiths to inform the life of the child: whichever religion possesses the ability to transform the lump of flesh into a child will gain the conversion of the unbelieving spouse. The parents determine the child must 'to liue...be brouȝt', be 'fourmed after a man', and have both 'liif & limes ariȝt' (612-15). A contest of might between faiths appears in the biblical account of Elijah and the prophets of Baal who compete to see which deity will consume their sacrifice with heavenly fire (I Kings 18). In a similar scene, the Sultan brings the child to the temple and invokes his gods to heal the lump of flesh. The Sultan offers fevered prayers of supplication to 'miȝtful Mahoun' until hoarse, yet the child 'lay stille as stone' (629-39). Their lack of response leads the Sultan to 'biheld on his godes alle | & seye þer miȝt no bot bifalle; Wel wo was him bigon' (643-45). He concedes the inadequacy of the power of his own gods to the princess. The Sultan's gods fail to provide physical and spiritual transforming power.

The princess seeks spiritual transformation through baptism. In response to the failure of the Sultan's gods, the princess summons a priest and requests he initiate the rite of baptism. The Sacrament of baptism for the medieval Catholic Church defined the moment of conversion and represented the seminal moment in a believer's life. At baptism, though born dead in sin, an individual was animated to spiritual life. Baptism then effected a spiritual transformation within the individual. This moment of redemption was considered miraculous. In the words of Benedicta Ward:

> For Augustine, and his hearers and readers, the central miracle was redemption; contemporary miracles were seen in relation to the life of conversion of the redeemed. They were evidences of grace abounding, ways of recognizing and entering into the central miracle of Christ's redeeming work.[431]

The moment Christ's redemptive work was realized within the believer, or the moment of his or her spiritual transformation, echoed the one miracle for the medieval Church,

[431] 'Miracles in the Middles Ages', *The Cambridge Companion to Miracles,* ed. by Twelftree, p. 151.

'that of creation, with its corollary of re-creation by the resurrection of Christ.'[432] Therefore, all miracles echoed creation and redemption, jointly embodied in the lump of flesh that requires both creation, that it be 'fourmed after man', and redemption, that it be given spiritual 'liif', 'animate existence', or 'soul'. With any miracle recalling creation and redemption, it is no surprise that they proliferate at holy rites, particularly at the moment of conversion through baptism. At times this spiritual transformation is expressed through physical transformation. Charles Grant Loomis notes the abundance of miracles that occur at the baptism of saints as children; all the chronicle analogues of *The King of Tars* record, whatever the physical form of the child, that baptism brings about the child's physical transformation; somatic miracles at baptism appear in the life of St Christopher and in the *Life of St Erkenwald*; and Eric II of Norway transforms during the holy rite of Mass (Eucharist) on the altar of St Francis.[433] Baptism marked the moment of a believer's spiritual transformation. At such a powerfully, transformative moment, baptism signalled to a medieval audience the possibilities of somatic transformation.[434]

Baptism, with its transformative spiritual nature, physically changes the lump of flesh into a child. Contact with Holy Water effects transformation: 'And when þat it cristned was | It hadde liif and lim and fas' (775-76). Baptism changes the lump of flesh: 'feirer child miȝt non be bore' (781); it now possesses a mouth with which it 'crid wiþ gret deray' (777). This cry, as much as its form, signifies the child's humanity. That which was formless is now 'wele schapen' (783). As the form of a lump of flesh represented its liminal spiritual status, this physical *signum* is removed once its spiritual status is clarified. The animation of soul correlates to a somatic formation of humanity. That which was inhuman now possesses both of Augustine's qualifiers of humanity: rationality,

[432] Ibid., p. 149.
[433] Loomis, *White Magic*, p. 23.
[434] For more on the mechanics of baptism in *The King of Tars*, see Siobhain Calkin, 'Romance Baptisms and Theological Contexts in *The King of Tars* and *Sir Ferumbras,*' in *Medieval Romance, Medieval Contexts*, ed. by Purdie and Cichon, pp. 105-19.

represented in the child's cry, and the likeness of man, present in its new form. The miracle of creation and re-creation through Christ's redemption are now evidenced on the very body of the child. Spiritual transformations effect physical transformations.

The sacraments inspire transformation in the closest analogues to *The King of Tars*. The Anglo-Latin *Chronicle of Lanercost*, records in the year 1280 that the Queen gave birth to Eric II of Norway:

> It happened that the Queen brought forth her first-born on the said saint's day, to the shame rather than to the joy, of the realm, [for it] resembled more the offspring of a bear than a man, as it were a formless lump of flesh. When this was announced to the king, strong in faith, he said, 'Wrap it in clean linen and place it on the alter of S. Francis at the time of the celebration.' Which having been fulfilled, when they came at the end of the service to take away what they had placed there, they found a lovely boy crying, and joyfully returned thanks to God and to the saint.[435]

> Accidit ut regina die sancti nominati [Jul. 16] primum ederet partum, pudibundum regno magis quam jucundum, ursi non viri præferens pignus, utpote frustum informe carnis, non filium. Quod cum regi perlatum fuisset, ille fide plenus ait, 'involvite lintheo mundo et hora conficiendi superponite sancti Francisci altario.' Quod cum impletum fuisset venientes in fine missæ, ut reciperent quod reposuerant, puerum formosum intus vagientem reperiunt, et Deo gratias læti et sancto referunt.[436]

The Chronicle of Lanercost clearly describes the child as 'frustum informe carnis', a formless lump of flesh. Again, the resemblance to 'ursis non viris' recalls the description of the bear's offspring in medieval bestiaries as born formless, as well as the description found within *The King of Tars*. As in other chronicle accounts, transformation is effected through the sacraments, here at the Eucharist, with the aid of St Francis. Sacraments and invocations to divine power inform transformation.

The physical transformation of his son affects the Sultan. He agrees to undertake the rite of baptism. Before he is touched by holy water, the priest re-names the Sultan. The priest first 'cleped þe soudan of Damas | After his owhen name' (926-27). In

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435 *The Chronicle of Lanercost, 1272-1346*, trans. by Herbert Maxwell (Glasgow: James Maclehose and Sons, 1913), pp. 21-22.
436 *The Chronicle of Lanercost,* ed. by Joseph Stevenson for the Maitland Club (1839), p. 104.

receiving Christian identity, the sultan's skin transforms from black to white. Naming catalyses the transformation. The next lines read: 'His hide, þat blac & loþely was, Al white bicome þurþ Godes gras' (928-29). Conrad Whitaker writes, 'The sultan becomes white at the moment the priest bestows his own name, Cleophas, on the sultan *in preparation* for baptism'.[437] Moreover, this somatic transformation fosters belief: 'And when þe soudan seye þat siyt | þan leued he wele on God almiyt' (931-32). Conferring identity brings about physical transformation, which in turn correlates to the Sultan's spiritual belief. Only after the Sultan's body transforms is he baptised with holy water. The Sultan's conversion occurs as divine power is written on his skin. Conferring Christian identity confers spiritual and physical transformation.

Naming which brings about transformation recalls the power of name-magic in religious and supernatural rites. At the creation of the world, divine power merely speaks a name and brings that name into existence. It also recalls the power of Adam's role of naming the creatures of the earth. Naming not only recalls divine authority, but also signifies change, transformation, and a turning point from something old to new. Jane Bliss writes that unlike romance, which rarely re-names to any permanent effect, in biblical precedents 'God renames after/as important events occur, to signify a new and powerful role for the person renamed.'[438] In the Bible, name-change marked interventions of the divine into human affairs in order to establish a covenant (Abram, Abraham; Sarai, Sara); a promise of future blessing, (Jacob, Israel; Lo-Ammi, Ammi; Lo Ruhaman, Ruhaman); or in the case of Saul to Paul, a demonstration of divine power in order to institute repentance, opportune conversion, and demonstrate mercy.[439] The intimate connection between a somatic 'mark' on the body, renaming, and conversion in the life

[437] Cord Whitaker, 'Black Metaphors in *The King of Tars', The Journal of English and Germanic Philology,* 112 (2013), 169-93 (p. 172).
[438] Jane Bliss, *Naming and Namelessness in Medieval Romance* (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2008), p. 35.
[439] See Genesis 17:5, 15; 35:10; Hosea 2:23; and Acts 13:9.

of St Paul align themselves with the Saracen Sultan in *The King of Tars*. The Sultan, by choosing to submit to the power of 'al mitful heven King', evidences this submission on his very skin.

The majority of scholarship on the Sultan's transformation offers a post-colonial interpretation that the Sultan must transform in order to integrate him into a Christian society.[440] However, for a romance that belabours spiritual themes to such an extent that some of the earliest scholarship on *The King of Tars* condemned it as a failed saint's life, the purpose of transformation for merely 'fleshly' or 'earthly' purposes, i.e. to ease assimilation of the black Sultan into white Christianity, appears incongruous with the somatic and spiritual nature of transformations evidenced thus far. Rather, didactic texts and hagiographies supply other explanations. In the Old English account of *The Holy Rood-Tree*, two Ethiopians see David carrying the Holy Rood, and they immediately recognize and respond to its power. As soon as they look on the roods, they visibly react to the cross's power. The two Ethiopians, 'hastened towards it [the cross] and touched the holy rods and prayed to them. When they had risen up again, all their blackness was turned to whiteness' (7 heo ða ðærto ȝeanes urnon 7 þa halȝæ ȝyrden gretton 7 heom ðærto bedon. Ða þe heo up arisene wæron þa wearð all heoræ swartnysse on hwitnesse iwænd).[441] The physical transformation, from black skin to white, becomes an icon of authority that leads others to marvel, praise, and wonder at the power that effected such a transformation. Here their spiritual insight to the power of the cross confers their somatic transformation, which in turn effects their conversions. Their skin testifies to their interior state.

[440] Heng, *Empire of Magic,* pp. 231-37; and Calkin, *Making of English Identity*, pp. 122-32.
[441] *The History of the Holy Rood-tree: A Twelfth Century Version of the Cross-Legend,* ed. by Arthur S. Napier, EETS O.S. 103 (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., 1894), in a facing page translation: Old English, p.16, ll. 25-27; English translation, p. 17, ll. 26-28.

Spiritual and somatic transformations also appear in the life of St Christopher. David Gordon White documents the earliest hagiographies of St Christopher from Eastern, Coptic sources, which describe him as a pagan, a giant of black skin, and one of the cynocephali.[442] The cynocephali were a race of men with dog-heads, in the land of the Chananeans, and were cannibals. Augustine, when defining the markers of humanity—rationality and human likeness—employs the cynocephali, who communicate through barking, to illustrate those who lack rationality and therefore humanity. Christopher's original name Reprebos meant 'the Condemned'.[443] However, according to the earlier hagiographies, Reprebos desires to witness the power of God and he prays for the gift of speech. In response to his prayer, an angel appears, strikes him, and blows into his mouth. This 'divine kiss' confers on Reprebos the ability to speak Greek as well as one of Augustine's qualifiers of humanity—rationality. At Reprebos's baptism, he receives the second qualifier of humanity—the likeness of man. Saint Babylus anoints him with holy oil and baptizes him, whereupon his appearance transforms. The dog-head and black skin vanish. His skin 'candidior lacte resplenduit', (shone white as milk).[444] Christopher's physical transformation into a man, from black skin to white, enables him to obtain salvation. His spiritual transformation, baptism, inspires his somatic form.

In fact, the Sultan in *The King of Tars* has striking affinities with St Christopher. Both Christopher and the Sultan are described in canine, doglike, and pagan terminology. Christopher descends from the cynocephali; *The King of Tars* describes the Sultan as a dog. The text uses the term 'Heathen hounds' to describes Saracens. The princess in an aside to the priest determines 'we schul make cristen men of hounds' (743). Additionally, on

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442 See David Gordon White, *Myths of the Dog-Man* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), pp. 34-36.
443 Ibid., 34
444 Walter of Speyer, *Vita et Passio Sancti Christopher Martyris,* in *Monumenta Germaniae Historica (inde ab anno Christi 500 usqe and annum 1500) Poetae Latini Medii Aevi. Vol 5.*, ed. by Karl Strecker and Gabriel Silagi (Leipzig: Monumenta Germaniae Historica, 1937-39; repr. Munich: Monumenta Germaniae Historica, 1978), pp. 63-79 (p. 68).

the eve of her wedding the princess dreams she is chased by 'an hundred houndes blake' (423) which are described as 'loþliche' (433). One hound breaks from the pack, and nearly 'hadde hir drawen adoun' (442), before divine power rescues her. The hound then transforms 'þurth miȝt of Ihesu' (449) into a man 'In white cloþes, als a kniȝt' (451). The words of the White Knight assure her safety:

> '[...] Mi swete wiȝt,
> No þarf þe noþing drede,
> Of Teruagaunt no of Mahoun.
> þi lord þat suffred passioun
> Schal help þe at þi nede' (452-6).

The affectionate address, 'Mi swete wiȝt', coupled with the threat of sexual mastery, indicates this hound is in fact the Sultan. However, this transformed individual, from black hound to White Knight, speaks to assure her of divine succour. This dream adumbrates the Sultan's conversion. Perryman writes, 'The importance of divine intervention to effect the transformation, and the contrasts between the states of animal and human, wild and restrained, grotesque and beautiful, black and white, all of which appear in the dream, pervade the whole work.'[445] These adjectives Perryman uses to describe the Sultan's transformation, black to white, animal to human, also resonate with descriptions of St Christopher. Moreover, both seek powerful deities and convert in submission to this might. Both of their bodies are transformed at baptism. The manner of their transformation, from black skin to white, appears the same. Their corporeal marks visually trumpet their spiritual transformations.

The King of Tars vividly illustrates how spiritual transformations, the moment when the soul moves from death to life, correlate to transformations of the body. In this romance spiritual transformations inspire physical transformations. Judith Perryman writes, 'every detail of the literary structure and imagery is used to develop the single

[445] Perryman, p. 60.

theme of the transforming power of faith'.[446] It testifyies to fears of miscegenation, which are displayed on the body of the couple's offspring. Modern science, coupled with medieval discourse, demonstrates the power of transformation required to animate the lump of flesh with spiritual and physical form. The power of baptism, the moment of spiritual animation from death to life, spills over to mark this spiritual change on the individual's form. Elements of baptism and naming, conferring on the Sultan Christian identity, prove somatically transformative and inspire further spiritual belief. The disturbing racial suggestions of the Sultan's epidermal change align the text with didactic accounts of divine power, particularly the account of St Christopher. In fact, this affinity proves so strong that the Sultan may even be read as a prototype of St Christopher. This romance chimes with other narratives of transformation and displays how spiritual transformations inspire somatic ones.

Saint Erkenwald

Spiritual transformation inspiring somatic change also occurs in the fourteenth-century *Life of St Erkenwald.*[447] Although this appears to be a hagiographic work, several aspects of this text align it more with romance than hagiography. Unlike hagiography it bears no details of Erkenwald's name, birth, or provenance; rather than discuss the many miracles of Erkenwald, this details only one. Moreover the focus of the text is on the preserved cadaver, rather than on Erkenwald. Eric Weiskott argues persuasively for reading *Erkenwald* as a romance.[448] In light of these aspects, as well as its vivid portrayal of transformation, *Erkenwald* will be included in this discussion. The narrative recalls how

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[446] Perryman, p. 53.
[447] *Saint Erkenwald,* ed. by Clifford Peterson (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977). All references to this edition by line number. See also T. McAlindon, 'Hagiography into Art: A Study of "St Erkenwald"', *Studies in Philology,* 67 (1970), 472-94 (p. 468).
[448] Eric Weiskott, *English Alliterative Verse: Poetic Tradition and Literary History* (Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

during renovation works of St Paul's Cathedral, a coffin is unearthed and upon being opened, reveals a well-preserved cadaver. This corpse, although so old no record of it exists in the Cathedral archives, has not decayed but appears lifelike. The descriptions of the corpse attest to this, such as its 'two rede lippes' (91) or 'als freshe hym þe face' (89), and is so lifelike that he could have been 'slippide opon slepe' (92). A divine miracle has diverted the course of a dead body's natural transformation—decay, and the scene contrasts starkly to the macabre portrayal of the dead merchant in *Amadace* or Guinevere's mother in *Awntyrs*.

Through divine intercession, Erkenwald speaks with the preserved body. Erkenwald fasts and spends a sleepless night imploring Providence to reveal to him the corpse's purpose. Erkenwald approaches the corpse and directly invokes it to speak. Immediately, the corpse reveals signs of life as it 'brayed a littelle' (190), 'his hedde waggyd' (281), and 'gefe a gronynge ful grete' (282). Signs of animation mark this preserved corpse. The body reveals he lived before Christ and was a righteous judge who adhered to justice and refused all bribes: 'for I was ryȝtwis and reken and redy of þe laghe' (245). The judge's characteristic of 'ryȝtwis' or 'rightfulness', in the Middle Ages was considered to be a cardinal virtue of justice and reflect the 'rightfulness' of God himself as judge. Moreover, he reveals that his corporeal body has been preserved by divine grace: 'þe riche kynge of reson... þus me arayed has' (268, 271).

The preserved corpse of the judge expresses, first-hand, the nature of limbo. The judge describes limbo with sensual imagery. The judge's experience of hell is one of destitution and absence: of hunger, cold, darkness, isolation, exile. He describes his condition in limbo 'in sorrow' and 'sike ful colde' (305), and 'hungrie in-wyt' (306). He uses corporeal metaphors of hunger and thirst to express his spiritual desires. Despite living before Christ, the judge keenly desires salvation and laments that he is 'exilid fro þat soper so, þat solempne fest' and that when Christ harrowed hell, he 'þaftes me þer'

(304, 292). His righteous longing affects all present who 'wepyd for woo þe wordes þat herden' (310), including Erkenwald.

This idea of a righteous pagan desiring salvation appears in other hagiographies, such as the legend of Gregory and Trajan, the similarities of which to *Erkenwald* are detailed by Gordon Whatley.[449] Trajan appears to Gregory in a dream and implores Gregory to entreat Christ on his behalf in order to receive salvation for which he so desperately longs. Gregory takes Trajan's request and beseeches God Almighty to save Trajan. While divine power affirmatively answers Gregory's prayer and Trajan is saved, Gregory must suffer punishment for such a liberal request. The story of Gregory and Trajan appears in hagiographic compendia and even features in *Piers Plowman*, possessing great cultural valency in the Middle Ages.

Unlike his analogues, Erkenwald 'does not pray for the pagan's soul, nor does he ask God directly to resuscitate the corpse... He merely wishes the corpse were not a corpse for the few moments it would take to baptize him.'[450] Erkenwald prays:

> "Oure Lorde lene," quoþ þat lede, "þat þou lyfe hades,
> By Goddes leue, as longe as I myȝt lacche water
> And cast vpon þi faire cors and carpe þes wordes,
> 'I folwe þe in þe Fader nome and His fre Childes,
> And of þe gracious Holy Goste' and not one grue lenger;
> þen þof þou droppyd doun dede hit daungerde me lasse." (315-20)

In an act of wishful thinking, Erkenwald articulates what he would like to say and do if 'þou lyfe hades': Erkenwald would immediately confer on the judge the rite of baptism. Incredibly, the wish of this prayer is fulfilled. As Erkenwald prays, his tears fall onto the corpse's face, causing the corpse to sigh. The corpse relates that Erkenwald's tears have

[449] See Gordon Whatley, 'The Uses of Hagiography: The Legend of Pope Gregory and the Emperor Trajan in the Middle Ages', *Viator,* 15 (1984), 25-63, and 'Heathens and Saints: St Erkenwald in Its Legendary Context', *Speculum*, 61 (1986), 330-63.

[450] Whatley, 'Heathens and Saints', p. 352. Whatley argues that Erkenwald's rightness of conduct as judge allowed him to receive this baptism. Unlike Gregory in the Trajan Legend, Erkenwald does not pray for the corpse's salvation, which would violate Church doctrine. When Gregory prays for Trajan's salvation, this is granted but Gregory must endure penance for making an unorthodox request.

functioned as his baptismal waters. The coupling of water and baptismal words effect this soul's spiritual transformation: 'For þe wordes þat þou werpe and þe water þat þou sheddes— | þe bryȝt bourne of þin eghen— my baptme is worthyn' (329-30). The tears prove spiritually transformative. The corpse's soul is now ushered from limbo into that heavenly feast: 'Ryȝt now to soper my soule is sette at þe table' (332). The redactor describes the corpse's desire for salvation through the motifs of spiritual hunger and thirst, now symbolically satisfied at the heavenly banquet. Moreover the judge's characteristic of 'rightfulness' reflects the fourth beatitude, and also describes the judge's dinner guests, those who 'þer richely hit arne refetyd þat after right hungride' (305).[451] The tears of Erkenwald function as the spiritual conduit between body and soul, between earthly liminality and spiritual rest.

The effects of this spiritual transformation are proven on the corporeal body. The judge's soul, now fit for the resurrection, no longer requires its corporeal body as *signum*. The judge's body is transformed: 'For as sone as þe soule was sesyd in blisse| Corrupt was þat oþir crafte þat couert þe bones' (344-45). Immediately, the body deteriorates. It becomes 'as roten as þe rottok þat rises in powdere' (344). Its putrefaction functions as evidence of its spiritual transformation. As in *The King of Tars*, baptism inaugurates spiritual and physical transformation.

Amoryus and Cleopes

Like *The King of Tars, Amoryus and Cleopes* details how spiritual transformation effects somatic change. Transformation speaks to eternal realities, the affective nature of divine love, and the place of the soul and body in the resurrection of the dead. Written in 1449 by John Metham and extant in one manuscript, *Amoryus and Cleopes* recasts Ovid's *Piramus*

[451] For more on this beatitude, see Mary-Ann Stouck, "'Mournynge and Myrthe" in the Alliterative "St Erkenwald"', *The Chaucer Review*, 10 (1976), 234-54. The heavenly feast appears in Isaiah 25:6.

and Thisbe as a medieval romance.[452] The little scholastic research there is on the romance defines Metham as a Chaucerian and notes the influence of Chaucer and Lydgate, as well as Alexandrian and homiletic romances, on Metham's work.[453] Particularly important to this romance is Metham's reception and adaptation of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Metham follows the plot of separated lovers, their trysts at the dividing wall, their appointment in the forest, and their subsequent dual suicide. However, Metham elongates the tale to include paeans to classical gods, a creation of a supernatural golden sphere through 'nigromancy', dialectic recitations on astronomy and classification of serpents, in addition to romance elements of battles with a dragon, tournaments, and the defeat of notorious knights. However, Metham's most significant alteration occurs in the representation of transformation. Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, of course, is inherently linked to transformative change. In Ovid, the moment of transformation occurs when the blood of Piramus dyes the mulberry tree from white to red. Metham shifts the moment of transformation from tree to bodies. He deliberately alters the double suicide to a bodily resurrection, thereby rewriting the pagan tale as Christian. Bodily resurrection performs a further transformative measure of destroying the power of pagan gods and effecting mass conversion. Stephen Page notes that Chaucer, when interpreting Ovid, tends to omit moments of metamorphosis.[454] In light of this, Metham's deliberate alteration of Ovid's

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[452] John Metham, *Amoryus and Cleopes*, ed. by Stephen F. Page, TEAMS (Kalamazoo, MI: Medieval Institute Press, 1999). Further references are to this edition by line number. This text is extant in Princeton University Library, MS Garrett 141, written in Norfolk dialect, and was composed for Metham's patrons, Sir Miles and Lady Katherine Stapleton of Ingham.

[453] See Page's Introduction to *Amoryus and Cleopes,* pp. 1-27*;* Stephen Page, 'John Metham's *Amoryus and Cleopes*: Intertextuality and Innovation in a Chaucerian Poem', *The Chaucer Review,* 33 (1998), 201-08; Jamie Fumo, 'John Metham's "Straunge Style": *Amoryus and Cleopes* as Chaucerian Fragment', *The Chaucer Review,* 43 (2008), 215-37; Roger Dalrymple, '*Amoryus and Cleopes*: John Metham's Metamorphosis of Chaucer and Ovid', in *The Matter of Identity,* ed. by Hardman, pp. 149-62; Amy Vines, *Woman's Power in Late Medieval Romance* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2011), pp. 53-83; and Robert Glendinning, 'Pyramus and Thisbe in the Medieval Classroom', *Speculum,* 61 (1986), 51-78. In particular, the introduction of the lovers Amoryus and Cleopes reflects the meeting between Troilus and Criseyde in the public setting of a temple, in the exchange of the gaze, and in signifying reciprocation on the part of the women through courtly devises that protect their honour while gratify their love experiences. Page, in his introduction to *Amoryus and Cleopas,* articulates Metham's indebtedness to Chaucer but also discusses his manipulation of other influences such as the Alexander romances.

[454] 'John Metham's *Amoryus and Cleopes',* pp. 207-08.

moment of metamorphosis, in direct opposition to the tendencies of his primary influence, Chaucer, realizes transformation as a significant and telling moment of adaptation. It positions transformation between pagan and Christian might, speaks to unperceived realities, and portrays love as the affecting passion which grants divine grace.

The love between Amoryus and Cleopes is positioned between the earthly and divine. The couple conceive their love within the temple of Venus. The opening narrative details how the priest of Venus, actually a cleric of 'nigromancy', devises a magic sphere to encompass the temple, complete with a firmament of stars and constellations, the planets in orbit, and emitting so marvelous a melody that it 'raveshyd' the listeners (519). The machinations for construction of this sphere are inherently tied to 'nigromancy'. The priest throws gold, silver, and precious stones into a pit of men's bones, and with 'hys boke and sacrifyse' (499) binds 700,000 spirits and forces them to construct the magic sphere. The sphere exemplifies the power of 'nigromancy' to harness illicit, demonic power attributed to the pagan gods. He highlights the gods as merely 'wykkyd spyrytys' come to 'the pepyl to ludyfye |To make them forsake God, and to turment her soulys everlastyngly' (589-90). The beautiful description of the temple, attributed to pagan deities, belie its demonic origin. This deceptive appearance situates the romance between the visible and the invisible, the spiritual and the physical, the demonic and the divine.

Amoryus and Cleopes encounter the other within this divine sphere and their amorous relationship is portrayed through religious conceits. The temple features as a place of holiness, and it is of no small importance that it is in this hallowed sphere the couple meet. Drawing on the precedent of *Troilus and Criseyde*, the love of Amoryus and Cleopes is portrayed through layers of pagan antiquity (the temple of Venus) and medieval courtliness (the amorous gaze).[455] Yet these layers make room for the subtle underscoring

[455] For further exploration of these ideas, see Corinne Saunders, 'The Affective Body: Love, Virtue and Vision in English Medieval Literature' in *The Body and the Arts*, ed. by Corinne Saunders, Ulrika Maude, and Jane Macnaughton (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 87-102.

of religious piety. Amoryus uses the ruse of prayer to Venus to excuse himself from his companions in order to approach Cleopes. As the image of Venus passes by, the two are forced to kneel next to each other, and whilst kneeling, the two contract their mutual affection. Cleopes replies to the gaze of Amoryus through the medium of an image from 'a boke that Cleopes had to sey on her devocionys' (801). The act of communal kneeling to a deity, the ruse of prayer, and Cleopes's devotional book with its similarities to a prayer book) signal a love expressed through terms that reflect medieval piety. The holy begets the amorous. Amorous affection is given license through holy devices. The two are conflated, and the narrative sustains and deepens this conflation.

The romance, following its Ovidian source, narrates the death of the lovers, and their combined death-wish for conjoined spirits sanctions divine powers for ontological transformation. Their degree of affection is evidenced in their deaths. Unlike Ovid, the couple are offered a tender moment of reconciliation and imminent death moves their love beyond physical affection. Before her death, Cleopes prays, 'O, Saturne! thee I bescche | The soule of this knyght in thi spere deyfy' (1752-53). Cleopes concerns herself with the soul of Amoryus in the hands of the gods. Amoryus too expresses his love in metaphysical terms. Thinking Cleopes dead, he says 'my spyryte nyl nowt abyde, | But nedys yow folw' (1720-21). Their love embodies metaphysical precepts and evolves from merely carnal enjoyments. This ontological aspect of their love figures again in their mutual, yet separate plea for conjoined spirits. Roger Dalrymple emphasizes that both parties desire their souls to be unified.[456] At his moment of death, Amoryus prays that Tricerberus 'conjoyne my spyryt onto my lady syde' (1701). Cleopes too asks that Saturn 'Conjoyne owre spyrytys, qwedyr thow wylt wyth joy or peyn' (1756). This mutual desire for combined souls, making the two souls one, reflects a love that is not merely carnal,

[456] Roger Dalrymple, '*Amoryus and Cleopes*', p. 161.

but spiritual. This metaphysical dimension is heightened when Cleopes prays that Saturn 'eke be now oure soulys leche' (1754). A 'leche' was surgeon for the 'flesh', as well as 'one who heals the soul'.[457] The soul's 'leche' replaces spiritual malady with divine healing. Their love has progressed beyond mere amorous affection. Indeed, in other medieval retellings, such as Pierre Bersuire's *Metamorphosis Ovidiana Moraliter [...] Explanata,* the story is allegorically interpreted as Christ's passion.[458] By conceiving the journey in terms of the soul, the lovers come to ascend from carnal pleasures to higher degrees of perfected love.[459] This progress demonstrates a depth of spiritual receptiveness.

As if in response to their request for conjoined spirits, divine providence intervenes in powerful, transformative ways. Transformation occurs through deliberate divine intervention. A holy hermit, named Ore, upon hearing Cleopes's dying shrieks, prays for wisdom, and in response, receives divine instruction. Divine light and music appear as well as a voice: 'Therwyth a voys soundyd, the qwyche bad hym hy | Thydyr he was ment for the soulys savacion | Of the pepyl of the cyté' (1825-27). The purpose of this intervention is clear: it is for the 'soulys savacion' of the entire city. The emphasis on 'soulys savacion' recalls the prayer of Cleopes on her death for Saturn to be their 'soulys leche;' the intervention for the sake of 'soulys' provides the remedy Cleopes prayed for. The metaphysical conception of the soul has shifted to become explicitly Christian.

The hermit, although realising the couple are pagans, uses the precedent of Christ's own death to invoke divine favour to transform the couple back to life. When he discovers the bodies are pagan lovers, the hermit prays 'that he wold | Hem turne to lyfe yf their krynsynd wold be' (1836-37)—to exercise physical transformative power only if it will influence spiritual conversion. Using all available influences, the hermit prays that

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[457] MED, 'leche', n.3
[458] Pierre Bersuire, 'The Story of Piramus and Thisbe', in *Amoryus and Cleopas,* ed. by Page, pp. 135-36.
[459] A good example of this is Dante's perception of Beatrice, which leads him to perceive divine glory. See Robert Pogue Harrison, 'Approaching the *Vita nuova',* in *The Cambridge Companion to Dante,* ed. by Jacoff, pp. 35-45.

Mary 'Be now my voket' (1853). Drawing on transformative precedents, in resurrections from death to life, the hermit compares the resurrection of Amoryus and Cleopes, with its salvific potential for the city Albynest, to Christ's own death and resurrection:

> If Thow wyl them restore
> To lyfe ayen, the pepyl of all the cyté …
> Schal fully be convertyd…
> As Thow dyidys for alle mankend,
> To redeme them that thralle were to the fend. (1842-48)

The impetus for somatic transformation, their resurrection, is salvation, the greatest transformative miracle.

The hermit, to effect transformation, attends to aspects of both body and the soul. Invoking the authority of the name of Christ, the hermit directly commands: 'yowre soulys into yowr bodyis | Entyr may ayen' (1864-65). The hermit ensures these temporal vessels are fit for habitation as he explicitly prays for somatic transformation for them to return 'hole and sound, wythowte wemme of yowre woundys' (1867). Moreover, he approaches Cleopes's body 'fast wepyng' (1857) to withdraw the sword and physically prepare her body for resurrection. In an act reminiscent of Jesus's command raising Lazarus from the dead ('Lazarus, come out'), the hermit commands them 'Nowe upryse' (1868). But he adds a further command: to rise singing. 'Yeve Hym preysyng wyth hole hert | That delyveryd yow hath fro peynys smert' (1868-69). In his prayer, the hermit calls for transformation that is wholeness of body in conjunction with wholeness of spirit, and applies the remedy as the 'soulys leche'.

The couple's resurrection, marked in powerful religious imagery, testifies to their spiritual conversion. At the hermit's command, 'bothe deede bodyis upbrayd' (1870) and immediately 'wyth o voys thei gan thise antune of Owre Lady' (1871). Their first act of new life is to sing a song of the Church, the 'Salve Regina', which indicates a transformative spiritual experience that has occurred posthumously. Their bodily actions indicate a spiritual change. The 'Salve, Regina' was a popular medieval hymn from the

eleventh century. It was sung daily by the Cistercians, was used as a processional hymn for Marian feasts, and used by universities as a common tune for evensong. In fact, 'there is considerable evidence that the hymn was popular as a song of exultant joy, a tribute more to its lilting melody… It was so eminently singable.'[460] The 'exultant joy' associated with 'Salve Regina' suitably reflects the spiritual transformation the souls have undergone. It demonstrates their joy for their new lease of spiritual and physical life. Their corporeal actions express a change of spirit. The text demonstrates that they sing the 'Salve Regina' in Latin, situating them no longer as pagans, aliens, and outsiders, but within the community of the Holy Church. [461] As they sing 'many a tere [...] ran fro ther ye' (1874). Both tears and song speak to emotive responses between body and soul and testify to transcendent experience.[462]

Metham describes transformation as the soul's journey in the afterlife to perceive eternal realities, effected through deliberate divine intervention. In response to the hermit's questions, they relate their curious testimony of the afterlife. Their souls were spirited to hell, 'dampnyd in fyre everlastyng | Amonge the fendys' (1882). Moreover they perceive the true nature of temporal deceptions. They see their pagan gods according to their true nature: 'Dampnyd spyrytys be in helle everlastyngly' (1895-96). The nature of their pagan gods causes the couple to shun them and embrace 'That God is none but one that regnyth in hevyn bryght' (1894). Their death has allowed their access into the 'pryvetee' of heavenly realities and revealed to them the true nature of spiritual forces. Moreover, the couple see the hermit intervening on their behalf and influencing divine forces to affect their conversion and resurrection. The hermit's act of intercession proves

[460] Juniper B. Carol, *Mariology*, 3 vols (Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company, 1961), III, p. 76.
[461] A. N. Williams discusses the importance of song as demonostrating unity within the wider Church. See 'The Theology of the Comedy', *Cambridge Companion to Dante*, ed. By Jacoff, pp. 201-17 (p. 214).
[462] For more on the affective nature of tears and song, see *Crying in the Middle Ages: Tears of History,* ed. by Elina Gertsman (New York: Routledge, 2011)*; Music and Transcendence,* ed. by Férdia J. Stone-Davis (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2015)*;* and John E. Stevens, *Words and Music in the Middle: Song, Narrative, Dance, Drama 1050-1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986).

to be so powerful it impresses itself on the heavenly sphere. Heavenly realities appear in the form of Mary, who commands their souls to be delivered to their bodies and an angel, who teaches them the 'Salve Regina'. Mary, the priest, and the angel illustrate a wide heavenly community of liminal bodies that actively intercede on behalf of the soul for its salvation. The couple's experience in hell opens their perception to divine realities, lifting the curtain between heaven and earth, and is a liminal experience that allows them to see the world for its true spiritual, nature.

Their resurrection expresses divine love invoked through ideas concerning the ladder of love. The hermit expresses this sentiment: 'And more pyté the los of yowre soulys to have sene, | But vertuus love of God was never denyid' (1921-22). This phrase is puzzling, but it implies that 'vertuus love' itself is 'of God'. As previously demonstrated, the love between Amoryus and Cleopes was not simply concerned with the body but also with the spirit. Virtuous temporal love that leads to contemplations of divine love reflects the philosophical notion found within Plato's *Symposium* which perpetuated much philosophical discussion in the Middle Ages.[463] Descriptions of courtly love were applied to Christ and the Church and courtly lovers were also described in religious terms.[464] The text implies that Amoryus and Cleopes's 'vertuus love' has afforded them this special access to divine love. In many ways, it is the romantic love between Amoryus and Cleopes that allows them to gain Christian conversion so readily. Their desire for conjoined spirits, and their simultaneous resurrection, their unity of song all illustrate the bond the lovers share. Death has enhanced this bond. Upon their resurrection neither lover looks at the other, but they with weeping eyes sing without ceasing. Their gaze has shifted to divine

[463] See Williams, 'The Theology', p. 214. See also, C. S. Lewis, *The Allegory of Love* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, repr. 1971).
[464] See Barbara Newman, *Medieval Crossover,* pp. 223-53; and Helen Cooper, 'Sanctifying Sexuality' in *English Romance,* pp. 241-251

contemplation. Their transformation from death to life has shifted their perceptions of love from the earthly to the divine.

Moreover, their death, through spiritual transformation, perfects their temporal affections. The hermit enquires about the degree their love has been affected by their transformative experience. He asks: "'Is the love," quod he, "as gret now as yt was before, | Or owdyr yt ys lessyd, or yt ys more?'" (1924-25). Do heavenly and earthly loves coincide or diverge? Amoryus responds that 'My love was never greter to this lady | Than yt ys at this owre, ner greter yt may be' (1920-21). Amoryus's loves for Cleopas has increased to his full capacity. Cleopes's response establishes the footing between earthly and divine love. "'I am," sche seyd, "so God plesyd be, wyth hert, wyll, and body,| Goddys and this knytys; and qwat fortune so-every endure,| Never to forsake hym for none erthly creature'" (1930-32). Her articulation of love echoes the greatest command, to love the Lord, as well as rephrasing the vows of marriage. She has conflated earthly and divine love, yet these do not contradict or subtract from the other. Their transformation has spiritually increased and perfected their capacity to love.

Their physical transformations functions to affect the spiritual state of the whole population of Albynest. The romance concludes in a manner fitting to hagiography with the deconstruction of pagan power. The hermit demonstrates that the golden sphere is manipulated and upheld by demonic machinations. He commands the spirits to show 'that his fantastyk spere | Is no thing materyal, but as the smoke of a fere' (2022). At the hermit's words, the sphere immediately breaks and the spirits become visible and fill the temple 'wungud lyke larkys' (2026). This destruction of the golden sphere and the revelation of the nature of their idols destabilizes the community's belief in pagan gods. However, it is the incredible testimony of Amoryus and Cleopas, testified to by their stigmata, that engenders belief in the community who quickly convert. The conversion

scene concludes with their mass baptism: 'He crystynnyd—men, women, and chyldyr, both gret and smalle' (3038).

The romance concludes with the couple's happy ending. Amoryus and Cleopes immediately marry and 'for ever ther gret love was the same | As in the begynnyng' (2082-83). The couple conceive many 'beuteus chyldyr', and after long felicity, the couple, on the same day, 'Yeldyd ther spyrytys to God' (2088) and are buried in the same tomb. Their second experience of death testifies to the ontological transformation that has occurred between them. Their first death appears to have conjoined their souls. Their second death transforms their love for a final time to heavenly felicity. Transformation attests to eternal realities as well as to divine and human love. Through the intercession of the hermit, the couple receive spiritual transformation, salvation from death to life. This spiritual transformation effects their physical resurrection. Their resurrected bodies, through song, evidence their transformative experience. Moreover, this is proven in their perfected love—both human and divine. Furthermore, their transformative tale fosters further spiritual conversions. Spiritual states change somatic forms.

Conclusion

Spiritual transformations mark the moment the soul moves from spiritual death to spiritual life. This powerful spiritual transformation is visibly realized in the sacrament of baptism. This moment of spiritual animation proves to be so powerful that its effects can spill over onto the somatic form. To signify the total change that has occurred within the spirit, somatic transformation marks this change through the corporeal body. These spiritual and physical transformations consolidate within one body, one person, one being. Moreover, divine power influences these spiritual transformations—not the power of 'nigromancy', nor of faery. These romances testify that only divine power has the ability to animate spiritual being.

However, while these romances demonstrate deep interest in divine power, none of these three exemplify proper conduct or behaviour or doctrinal theology as upheld by the medieval Church. *The King of Tars,* so religious in tone, surprisingly frustrates expectations created by the use of hagiographic motifs. The narrative employs hagiographic motifs and writes the Princess of Tars as a Constance figure. However, this Constance figure marries a heathen, converts to heathen law, and consummates her heathen marriage—none of which were expected in Constance's legend. The princess's actions clearly violate Church doctrine, yet despite her apparent sinful behaviour, divine power transforms her son at baptism. As is the case with Bewtris in *Chevalere Assigne*, divine providence intercedes, powerfully, for figures who are less than holy. Moreover, the description and transformation of the Sultan, as a heathen hound, in his submission to divine power, and in his transformed skin, resonate with descriptions of St Christopher and even write the Sultan in the likeness of this saint. These examples frustrate hagiographic motifs and employ them in startling and dramatic ways.

Erkenwald's account of saving a pagan judge also contradicts orthodoxy. *Erkenwald* cleverly rewrites the story of Gregory and Trajan so that Erkenwald does not violate orthodox tenets. Divine power chooses to read Erkenwald's wishful prayer and empathetic tears as components worthy of the judge's baptism. Moreover, the judge's preserved body suggests that divine providence intended to save this judge at an ordained future moment. Divine power chooses to act in surprising ways that violate the reader's conception of doctrinal tenets. It moves toward divine 'pryvetee' of predestination: in wonderful ways it will save those it chooses.

Furthermore, in *Amoryus and Cleopes*, love that promotes divine grace for idolaters contradicts orthodox theology. Their pagan ancestry, their devotion to idols, and supremely, their suicide, considered by the medieval Catholic Church an act for which

there was no grace, are written in *Amoryus and Cleopes* as a great *felix culpa*. *Felix culpa* translates as 'fortunate sin'.[465] The *felix culpa* is even articulated by the couple:

> For alle thise goddys Hys creaturys be,
> And noght thei may do wythowte hys sofyrauns,
> That owre myschevus ende hath now browt to felycyté. (1898-1900)

The ideas of predestination, sovereignty, and free will are brought into troubling question. In medieval texts ideas of the *felix culpa* referred to Adam's Fall as a fortunate fault because it enabled a greater display of God's mercy.[466] Metham's representation of Amoryus and Cleopes easily expresses the death and resurrection of Christ. The hermit prays that Amoryus and Cleopes be brought to life, 'As Thow dyidys for alle mankend,| To redeme them that thralle were to the fend' (1847-48). When they are resurrected, they still bear the stigmata of their scars and these they show to the community as evidence that what they say is true. The *felix culpa* even functions allegorically as a typology of Christ.

None of these three romances, so careful to project Christian beliefs, writes these tenets in accord with doctrinal teachings. They explore the boundaries of theology; they concoct fictional scenarios and question how divine power might choose to work in morally dubious situations. These texts speak to an omnipotence that is not bound by human interpretations of theology, intentionally upsetting these boundaries in order to emphasize that divine might cannot be limited by man's understanding and that the inception of divine grace knows no bounds. Transformation, embedded in body and the spirit, provides a platform for these liminal discussions. Moreover, these romances represent transformations of body and spirit consolidated in the same person and show that spiritual transformations can inspire somatic transformation. Not 'nigromancy', not faery, only divine power transforms the spirit. These spiritual transformations can be so

[465] See Newman, *Medieval Crossover,* pp. 13-25.

extreme that they influence the form of an individual's body. The animation of spiritual life functions as spiritual conduit. Inner transformation is etched on the body.

Conclusion

This thesis has examined transformations of the body and spirit, a central concern in medieval English romance. There exists in romances, most often orchestrated by 'nigromancy' or the power of faery, a symbiotic relationship between the external transformation of one person and a relation to the interior of another. This relationship strengthens in its revelations of inward character as this study has progressed from chapter to chapter. However, this relationship between somatic transformation on one body and internal transformation of another has a negative correlation. The more extreme the physical transformation, the less it reveals about the other person's private interior. The greater the revelation of interior character and sin, the less extreme is the somatic transformation. As these chapters progress to examine inward conditions of transformation, and as the texts in this study move from revealing identity to revealing flaws in chivalric conduct, to sin and even influencing the correction of sin, the revelation of identity steadily becomes more invasive. Over the course of this study, somatic transformations have evolved to a human form. In the final chapter, both transformations become localized in the same body and the same soul. The exterior agent affecting inward interiority of another has now evolved to the point that its presence is no longer required. One individual exemplifies the transformation of both body and spirit. These transformations localized in one body and soul, however, are explicitly Christian. While 'nigromancy' or the power of faery may alter physical form, romances featuring these transformations unite to testify that only divine power can animate spiritual being. Moreover, these transformations in one body reveal inward states of character. In other cases, spiritual animation, at conversion, proves so powerful this affects the somatic body. Body becomes testament to spiritual states.

All of these romances demonstrate engagement with Augustine's qualifiers of humanity—a likeness of Adam and a rational mind. In broad terms these may even be said to correspond to the somatic ('likeness of Adam') and the interior identity ('rational mind'). In this way, even Augustine's tenets concerning what it means to be human engage with the somatic and identity, exterior and interior. However, although all these romances present in this study display a keen interest in Christian doctrine and tenets, all employ this Christian doctrine liberally and in ways that would contradict orthodox teaching. *William of Palerne* presents a werewolf as a Christ-figure; *Chevalere Assigne* displays enduring transformed animal states through the redemptive imagery of Christ. 'Nigromancy' shapes the Lady of Sinadoun's body and her serpentine form reads as a devil typology; yet the moment of her disenchantment uses biblical imagery of creation and redemption. The testing narratives concerning Gawain engage with the secular pursuits of chivalry, yet these conceits of testing draw on powerful hagiographic precedents. The test by the transformed figure who is not what he appears to be recurs in hagiography and through motif transference, is employed by romance. Moreover, these narratives treat marvellous beheadings, which surely resonated to a medieval audience of the cephalophore legend. Women in transformed bodies reflect cultural fears, fostered by the Church, concerning liminal women. Yet these women have greater potential power to probe the depth of a knight's moral character. Amadace, the Green Knight, and Robert confess their sins, and their narratives accept these confessions as valid, yet all confound practices condoned by the Church. *Awntyrs* shows a baptised queen suffering hell-fire. *The King of Tars,* drawing heavily on hagiographic precedents, upsets these when not only is the threat of rape of the Constance-figure realised, but as a result of such an action, the princess begets a formless lump of figure. A Saracen sultan is read as St Christopher, and proud kings receive the death of saints. Divine might preserves the corpse of a pagan judge expressly in order to confer on him salvation. The damned can receive heavenly

glory. Moreover, divine might intervenes powerfully to resurrect two pagan idolaters who have committed suicide. None of these romances depict transformation or religious tenets in concord with orthodox Church belief, but instead indicate the rebellious manner in which romance treats orthodoxy.

The romances in this stody are rooted in Christian concepts of being—as evidenced in their interest in bodies and souls—appear to use moments of transformation in order to consider salvation, ontology, and metempsychosis. Transformations, with their fluctuations in form, readily foster moments to discuss the liberality of God's grace. They emphasize Augustine's considerations of metamorphosis in Book XVI: that the power and wonder of God is not to be diminished. Moreover, they explore questions that could not be considered with any pretence of orthodoxy: what if a liminal faery desires salvation? What if the powers of 'nigromancy' could transform the bodies of princes? How would divine power respond to an impenitent queen or king—and what incredible means would God employ in order to foster penitence? Romance, as a secular genre, allows these concepts to be explored in ways neither hagiography nor *exempla* could. Romance's transformations of body and spirit enable discussions of the sacred and secular through their presentation of the power of magic and the supernatural.

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